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THE REAL LORD BYRON.

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VOL. II.



# THE REAL LORD BYRON

NEW VIEWS OF THE POET'S LIFE.

BY

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AUTHOR OF

‘A BOOK ABOUT THE CLERGY,’ ‘A BOOK ABOUT DOCTORS

‘A BOOK ABOUT LAWYERS,’

&c. &c.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,

13 GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

1883.

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L O N D O N :

Printed by STRANGEWAYS & SONS, Tower Street, Upper St. Martin's Lane.

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# THE REAL LORD BYRON.

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## CHAPTER I.

### S W I T Z E R L A N D.

Brussels—Waterloo—The Poet's Mode of Travelling—Other Tourists—Hotel Sécheron—Villa Diodati—Polidori—Genevese Scandal-mongers—Byron's Wrath against Southey—His Overture to Lady Byron—His Rage at its Failure—His Promise to Claire—Allegra's Birth and Death—Claire's Scornful Words—Telesa Guiccioli—Bernese Oberland.

SAILING from Dover on the 25th April, 1816. Byron entered the harbour of Ostend on the night of the 26th, having suffered little from the sea during a passage which, though favourable, would in these days of quick steamers be thought tedious. Accompanied by three servants (William Fletcher and Robert Rushton, the yeoman and page of *Childe Harold's* 'first canto, and a Swiss named Berger), he was also attended by Polidori—the vain and light-headed young doctor, of Italian name and parentage, who, after playing the part of a literary impostor with his impudent expansion of Byron's brief prose sketch, 'The Vampire,' closed a rather discreditable career by suicide; a form of death from which he had been saved in Switzerland by his patron's generosity, shortly before the poet dismissed from his service so embarrassing an associate.

Having provided himself with a capacious and luxurious coach (so constructed, on the model of Napoleon's travelling-carriage taken at Genappe, as to contain a bed, a library, a plate-chest and a dinner-service) and a caleche for his baggage and servants (the vehicle whose purchase involved the poet in a rather comical dispute with an extortionate Brussels coach-builder), Byron journeyed leisurely through Flanders and by the Rhine route to Switzerland,—a course through which he may be accompanied in the third canto of 'Childe Harold;' the poem of Waterloo, the Rhine and Lake Lemman. It was at Brussels after a visit to the famous field that the poet committed to paper (in Mrs. Pryce L. Gordon's album) the two first of the Waterloo stanzas, the second of them containing the lines,

' Here his last flight the haughty eagle flew,  
Then tore, *with bloody beak*, the fatal plain;  
Pierced with the shafts of banded nations through,  
Ambition's life, and labours, all were vain—  
He wears the shatter'd links of the world's broken chain;'—

a description that was relieved a few weeks later of a serious blemish, on the suggestion of the clever artist (R. R. Reinagle), who, on consenting to illustrate the verses with a vignette, remarked that the chained bird must be drawn, striking the earth with his talons. 'Reinagle,' the poet wrote in acknowledgment of the painter's criticism, 'is a better poet and ornithologist than I am: eagles, and all birds of prey, attack with their talons, and not with their beaks, and I have altered the line thus:—

"Then tore, with bloody talon, the rent plain."

This is, I think, a better line, besides its poetical justice.'

So discriminating and judicious a biographer as Karl Elze having expressed astonishment that Byron, only a few weeks since *vis-à-vis de rien*, should have been able to travel so expensively, it is well to remind the reader of this page that the poet's most urgent pecuniary embarrassments were less due to insufficiency of means for current expenses, than to the absence of money for the payment of long growing debts;—that, notwithstanding the magnitude of his incumbrances, the owner of Newstead and Rochdale could still have borrowed ten thousand pounds of the most cautious money-lenders;—that he still had friends (like Kinnaird the banker, Rogers the banker, and Murray the publisher) able and ready to minister to his financial necessities;—and that the writer (the demand for whose writings had been stimulated instead of checked by the scandal of his domestic trouble) was well aware that his genius would afford him a revenue exceeding both his necessities and desires, as soon as he should get the better of a foolish scruple of false pride, and condescend to write for money. The poet who received 1050*l.* for 'Parisina' and the 'Siege of Corinth,' who sold the third canto of 'Childe Harold' at a rate of more than 28*s.* a line, and who got for the fourth and much the longest Canto of the same poem something more than 25*s.* a line, could have afforded to indulge in the pomp of three servants, the comfort of a luxurious coach, and the services of a travelling physician, even if he had been altogether dependent on his brain and pen.

In the previous February, when duns were at his

door and bailiffs in his house, Byron had proposed distributing between three necessitous men of letters the thousand guineas, which Mr. Murray had recently pressed upon him in payment for 'Parisina' and 'The Siege of Corinth.' And had it not been for the publisher's reluctance to act in accordance with his client's munificent design, 600*l.* of 1050*l.* would have been given to Mr. Godwin, to whom the poet may have been disposed thus generously by regard for the philosopher's step-daughter as well as by respect for his services and concern for his distress. As Coleridge and Maturin were to have divided the remaining 450*l.*, after Godwin had been relieved with the much larger sum, the arrangement indicates a preference, for which Claire may be conceived to have been accountable; and whilst the excellence of Byron's motives in the affair is not affected unfavourably by the suggestion that he was just then looking out for an opportunity of doing Jane Clermont's people a substantial service, one would like to believe that Jane (whose reputation needs whatever good can be spoken of it) was not slow to use her influence with the poet for her mother's advantage, though she was far too proud and high-hearted a girl to have thought for an instant of exerting it for her own selfish benefit.

Whilst Byron's huge coach was rolling along the banks of the Rhine, another party of English travellers journeyed less luxuriously and leisurely to Switzerland by the less picturesque route. This second party consisted of another poet, two young women (neither of whom was nineteen years old) and an infant.—They were Shelley (younger by four years

than Byron, who was still only twenty-eight years of age); Mary Godwin, who had for some time been living in the closest of affectionate relations to Shelley, though she was not his legal wife; her sister-by-affinity, Jane Clermont *alias* Claire, the girl of bright eyes, olive complexion, Italian features and southern fervour; and Mary's infant son William, her first child by the poet whose name she had taken together with his heart. There was one strange point of resemblance in the two parties, that by different ways and in different modes were moving to the same Swiss hotel. Each of the poets had left a wife in England, from whom he had been separated by inauspicious circumstances. But the fortunes of the two wives had no similitude. Whilst Lady Byron had retired to her parent's stately home, the woman of untarnished honour who lived to be a peeress in her own right; Mrs. Shelley was dropping through shame and guilt to the despair, in which her melancholy story closed by her own act.

It has been the practice of Shelley's biographers to deal with the meeting of these two parties at the Hotel Sécheron, just outside Geneva, as an unpremeditated occurrence; and though he has sought it with some pains, the writer of these pages has sought in vain for *positive* testimony that both parties started from England with the purpose of uniting in Switzerland. The circumstantial evidence, however, is overwhelming that the meeting was no mere accident. Still the evidence is only circumstantial; and some uncertainty attends all conclusions from the inferential testimony of circumstances. In reference to Byron's previous knowledge of Claire and his reunion

with her by the bright waters of Leman, Mr. William Michael Rossetti (a biographer no less conscientious than acute and careful) observes in his 'Memoir of Shelley,' 'Byron possibly—indeed, probably—had then admired her : if not then, he did so now. The result was the birth, in the following January, of the daughter known to Byronic biographers as Allegra or Alba. Shelley and Mary knew nothing of this fleeting outburst of passion at the time, and were by no means pleased when its results became apparent. But they acted with perfect good feeling, and did everything for Allegra and her mother.' Shelley and Mary may well have been troubled by the appearance of its results, may even have been surprised by consequences, following so quickly on their cause, but it is beyond belief they were so ignorant of this fleeting outburst of passion at the time. It being certain that the fleeting passion had its birth and first triumph in London it is inconceivable that it was withheld by Claire from Mary. The only motives a girl in Claire's position could have for holding her passion from the knowledge of her sister would be motives of shame and delicacy. Such motives cannot be supposed to have influenced Jane Clermont in her intercourse with her sister-by-affinity,—the wife of a man to whom she was not married, the mother of a child who in the law's eye from one point of view was no one's child. Claire saw no sin in her passion for Byron, no reason why she should blush to avow it. Five years later when in the bitterness of her displeasure at his plan for her child's education, she exclaimed to Byron, 'I alone, misled by love to believe you good, trusted to you and now reap the fruits,' Claire only rendered

bare justice to the feelings which gave her to his power. Believing him good she loved him; loving him because she believed him good and found him unutterably delightful and dear to her, she consented to what was his desire and her own gladness. What was there in such an affair to rouse shame in the eighteen-years-old Claire, who had been taught to believe that the love which yearned for marriage was the only sanction its marriage needed? Prudence might have determined her to be silent to the world about so innocent a passion, but would not have required her to be silent to her closest female friend, her sister, who was already loving Shelley and living with him, precisely as she herself was loving and hoping to live with Byron. Certainly on all other matters, there was the fullest confidence between these young girls of the same home. Their mutual affection glowed with the impetuosity of girlish romance. Mary had in every turn and trial of her love for the one poet enjoyed Claire's sympathy, approval and encouragement. Is it to be imagined that the impulsive Claire was less frank about her passion for the other poet? or that Mary—to whom the affair must have been peculiarly acceptable, from its close resemblance to her own affair of the heart—was less liberal of approving words and cordial wishes? Is it conceivable that on this subject alone—the topic which must have made Claire bubble over with sisterly communicativeness—there was a reserve in the mutual confidence, that was otherwise so perfect?

Whilst it is impossible to believe that Mary was excluded from Claire's confidence on this most interesting and absorbing subject, it is difficult to imagine

it a matter on which Mary gave no confidence at all or only a half-confidence to her own poet. Why should she have withheld from him anything of a matter that would appear to him alike innocent, reasonable, and advantageous both to Claire and Byron ;—an arrangement that would afford him the agreeable feeling that his own way of dealing with the gentler sex, having been already imitated by the most popular poet of his generation, would soon be imitated by other persons of supreme sensibility and enlightenment? The thing he approved for himself was no thing for Shelley to disapprove in Byron's case. The course, which was virtuous for Mary, could not strike him as vicious for Mary's sister. True that he and Byron were widely different men,—that whilst he was calm and stedfast of purpose, Byron was passionate and volatile, almost on principle. But as he never saw Byron till they met at Geneva, Shelley may well have been altogether unaware, was certainly by no means fully aware of this difference, whilst the two parties were journeying to their place of meeting. True, also, that Mary and Claire (sisters only by affinity) differed greatly in temper, judgment, feeling, as well as in personal appearance. But the difference may have escaped the poetic dreamer and gentle mystic who lived more in the clouds than on the earth's surface. Moreover systems (and the younger poet's view of marriage was part of a system of morals commended for acceptance to universal human nature) —may not be nicely considerate for the peculiarities of individuals. Certainly no injustice is done to Shelley by the suggestion that he went to Geneva with a clear knowledge of Claire's passion for Byron



and of her expectation of meeting him there, or by the statement that on his road to Geneva (in his ignorance of certain of Byron's infirmities,—at least, his ignorance of them from personal observation) he would have seen nothing to disapprove in an arrangement for Claire to live with her admirer, even as he was himself living with her sister-by-affinity.

In connexion with these reasons for thinking it probable that Shelley started for Switzerland with a knowledge of Claire's passion for Byron, and even carried her to Geneva for the express purpose of restoring her to his society, it may be remarked that—instead of setting out for the Swiss capital without alleging a reason for the journey, or with a bare announcement to his friends that he was going thither because it was his pleasure to do so—the author of 'Queen Mab' covered his departure with a false pretext. It is disagreeable to attribute falsehood to anything said or done by a man who was (to adopt Mr. Rossetti's words) 'loftily veracious in essentials,' and who suffered more for what he conceived to be the truth than any other man of his generation. The evidence, however, is conclusive that the poet's alleged reason for going abroad in the beginning of May and all the various statements touching the pretext were purely fictitious. His pretext for a course of action, for which he was under no obligation to give any reason whatever, was that he desired to escape from the reach of his father and one of his uncles, who were conspiring to seize his person and put him in confinement. He even alleged that he had received warning of this conspiracy from Mr. Williams, the agent of Mr. Madocks of Tanyrallt. The whole

story was an invention. There was no such conspiracy. Mr. Williams never told the poet to beware of such a plot. How are we to account for so astounding a fiction from lips so truthful under ordinary circumstances? Mr. Rossetti is of opinion that the poet's apparent falsehood was due to overwrought fancy. 'We must remember,' says the admirable biographer, 'that a poet is "of imagination all compact:" and, as no one has better right than Shelley to the name of a poet, none consequently had a readier store of imaginations which he propounded as realities.' After all that has been written of the tricks played him by his imagination, it still remains to be proved that Shelley suffered in so unusual a way from the force of his fancy. In April and May, when Byron's movements were the subject of much curiosity and gossip, and other persons besides Mrs. Clermont (the mischief-maker) were no less curious about Jane Clermont's (Claire's) movements, Shelley—at the moment of preparing to take the girl to Geneva, where *she* at least hoped to meet Byron—may well have been desirous of baffling the spies and tattlers, eager for evidence that Claire was going after her admirer. Under such circumstances, even so veracious a man as Shelley would be tempted to hoist a false flag, and might feel himself justified in shielding his ladies with an untruth, that could not do harm to anyone. Even if the fiction was believed by its utterer, the delusion may have been the result of the poet's strong and natural desire for secrecy, acting on his quick and powerful fancy.

Byron was preceded to Switzerland by the sinister reports that attended him henceforth almost to the

grave ;—the invisible and blighting angel of defamations that, hovering over every house in which he dwelt in Switzerland and Italy, caused it to be regarded with curiosity and repugnance as the abode of a mysteriously wicked man, no less splendid by mental endowments than hateful for crime, whose sensibility was tainted with vile desire, and whose divine faculty of song gave pernicious beauty to poisonous thought.

There was commotion in the Sécheron hotel when the poet's carriages drew up at its entrance: and before he had been there an hour, his name had been uttered in every corridor and chamber of the house. Shelley's party had engaged the attention of the inmates of the hotel for eight days before the appearance of Byron and Polidori. The interest taken in each of the two parties was heightened by the closeness of their association and intimacy. It was whispered amongst the idlers that Mary was no ceremoniously wedded wife, that Claire was her sister in the fullest sense of the term, that Byron had found in the bright brunette an agreeable substitute for his unforgiving wife. It is needless to say that the people and visitors of the hotel were at no pains to conceal their curiosity, and for its gratification did not shrink from outrages of intrusiveness. When the poets and the ladies went for a drive, they could not get to their carriage without passing through a crowd of starers. They were attended by the same throng of whispering gazers to the water's marge, when they took boat for their evening's enjoyment of the lake. On landing by twilight or moonlight they were again under intrusive inspection. To escape from this source of continual annoyance, the two parties moved from

the hotel to villas on the Mont Blanc side of the lake,—Byron and Polidori to the Villa Belle Rive, Shelley and the ladies to a small house only a ten minutes' walk distant. The result of the migration was, however, less than satisfactory ; for in the gardens of the villa and cottage and on the way between the two habitations, the objects of interest could still be watched from a distance through telescopes ; and in order that his guests might not be altogether deprived of an amusement which had for more than a fortnight redounded to his advantage, the obliging host of the Hotel Sécheron was at pains and charges to provide them with telescopes of sufficient power. For greater privacy the victims of curiosity and scandalous gossip moved again—Byron into the Villa Diodati, Shelley with the wearers of petticoats into the little house at its foot, the Maison Chapuis or Campagne Mont Alègre, to which Allegra (born in the first month of the ensuing year) was indebted for her name. Screened by the umbrage of their grounds, the tenants of these pleasant dwellings could be no longer watched by the possessors of telescopes. It was, however, still possible for the curious idlers to talk freely of the persons withdrawn from their view, and imagine the scenes they were not permitted to survey. Of the license of these gossip-mongers it is enough to say that on coming to Geneva in September, immediately after the departure of Shelley for England, Hobhouse learnt that local rumour charged his friend with living on terms of scandalous familiarity with both and each of the two ladies, who had been recently residing in the house of a neighbouring gentleman immediately

under the Château Diodati. If, therefore, he made the offensive statement, which caused Byron, in the 'Observations' (March 15, 1820) on the 'Blackwood article' on 'Don Juan,' to denounce him furiously for trying to blast the character of the daughter of the woman (Mary Wollstoncraft) whom he had formerly loved, Southey only repeated in England the story that came to Hobhouse's ears in September 1816;—the story which in the last-named month was generally told and believed in Geneva, alike by the tourists of the hotels, and the habitual residents of the capital; the story which Hobhouse, on his return to England, repeated to his friends as an example of the egregious slanders circulated in the Swiss capital about his friend, at a time when he was living with temperance and industry.

'When I left England in April 1816.' Byron wrote in 1820, 'ill in mind, in body, and in circumstances, I took up my residence at Coligny, by the Lake of Geneva. The sole companion of my journey was a young physician, who had to make his way in the world, and having seen very little of it, was naturally and laudably desirous of seeing more society than suited my present or my past experience. I therefore presented him to those gentlemen of Geneva for whom I had letters of introduction; and having thus seen him in a situation to make his own way, retired for my own part entirely from society, with the exception of one English family, living at about a quarter of a mile's distance from Diodati, and with the further exception of some occasional intercourse with Coppet at the wish of Madame de Stäel. The English family to which I allude consisted of two

ladies, a gentleman and his son, a boy of a year old. One (*i.e.* Southey) “of ‘these lofty-minded and virtuous men,’ in the words of the ‘Edinburgh Magazine’” (*i.e.* Blackwood’s) “made, I understand, about this time, or soon after, a tour in Switzerland. On his return to England, he circulated—and, for anything I know, invented—a report, that the gentleman to whom I have alluded and myself were living in promiscuous intercourse with two sisters, “having formed a league of incest” (I quote the words as they were repeated to me), and indulged himself on the natural comments on such a conjunction, which are said to have been repeated publicly, with great complacency, by *another* of that poetical fraternity’ (*i.e.* “the Lakers”), ‘of whom I shall say only, that even had the story been true, *he* should not have repeated it, as far as it regarded myself, except in sorrow. The tale itself requires but a word in answer,—the ladies were *not* sisters, nor in any degree connected, except by the second marriage of their respective parents, a widower with a widow, both being the offspring of former marriages; neither of them *were*’ (*sic*), ‘in 1816, nineteen years old. “Promiscuous intercourse” could hardly have disgusted the great patron of pantisocracy (does Mr. Southey remember such a scheme?), but there was none. . . . He’ (*i.e.* Southey) ‘has written “Wat Tyler,” and taken the office of poet laureate,—he has, in the “Life of Henry Kirke White,” denominated reviewing “the ungente craft” and become a reviewer—he was one of the projectors of a scheme, called “pantisocracy,” for having all things including women, in common (*query*, common women?) and he sets up as a moralist

—he denounced the battle of Blenheim and praised the battle of Waterloo—he loved Mary Wollstonecraft, and he tried to blast the character of her daughter (one of the females mentioned).’

In this review of some of the circumstances of his journey to and sojourn in Switzerland, readers have an example of the insincerity and disingenuousness with which Byron used to write and speak about his private affairs. The prominence given to the sex of the sole companion of his journey was not innocent of a delusive purpose. By calling attention to his having made the journey without a female companion he guarded against the suspicion of journeying to the Hotel Sécheron to meet one. The suggestion that Southey may have invented a piece of the common talk of the Genevese coteries during his stay amongst them was a deliberate and malicious *suggestio falsi*. Though the full statement of the relation in which the ladies stood to one another was accurate, the introductory denial of their sisterhood was inaccurate. Byron was curiously persistent in this denial of a rumour that troubled him greatly. In a letter, written at Venice in May, 1819, about Polidori’s vamped-up ‘Vampire,’ he avers ‘The ladies are not sisters.’ He must have known that girls, connected by parental marriage in the manner accurately set forth, were sisters-by-affinity : and had the rumour of their intercourse with him been truthful, the intercourse, in the judgment of the Catholic Church (which in 1820 the poet regarded as the best as well as the most ancient of the great Christian Churches), would have been none the less incestuous because, instead of being sisters-by-blood, they were only sisters-by-affinity.

When he represented that he went into Genevese society only for Polidori's sake, the poet was less than truthful. It cannot have passed in 1820 from his memory, so retentive of annoying incidents, that on coming to Geneva with numerous letters of introduction he had every disposition to go into society for his own pleasure, and that he did not prefer a life of retirement from the coteries of a capital, which retained much of its ancient narrowness and austerity in matters of religion and morality, until he discovered how unfavourably he was regarded in those coteries. Even at Coppet he was made to feel it would be imprudent for him to go just then into the society of the *salons*. Everyone remembers how his Satanic presence amongst Madame de Stäel's guests made Mrs. Hervey (the novelist), a gentlewoman of many years (65) and let it be hoped of as many virtues, scream with terror and faint away. When nervous ladies swooned or went into hysterics at the bare sight of so wicked a young man in a *salon*, not especially famous for orthodoxy and severity of manners, Byron received other and more serious intimations that Geneva felt for him in July precisely as London had felt for him in April. His statement that he went into the society of the Swiss capital out of paternal benevolence to his young doctor, and left it out of pure preference of seclusion was hypocritical affectation.—'Bam' qualified with pure falsehood; the simple truth of the matter being that he was in no mood for society, because society was in no mood for him.

The nature of Byron's show of indignation and disgust (March 1820) at Southey's monstrous calumny



is revealed by the fact, that just twelve months later, (March 1821) he could imagine Shelley capable of the offence pointed to in the slander, and could remind Hoppner lightly of their knowledge of Shelley's vicious intimacy with his wife's sister-by-affinity. When Byron thought in this fashion of Shelley, he had long been at enmity with Claire, who in March 1821 protested angrily and with an imprudent use of her power of sarcasm against his action in putting her child, Allegra, into a conventual school, and against his determination to have her educated in the Catholic faith. At this time Byron and Hoppner believed that Claire had become the mother of another child, whom she had put into some Italian Foundling Hospital for nurture during its infancy. Hoppner, who as the Britannic Consul-General at Venice may have had better evidence than a maid-servant's tattle respecting the matter, was certain that Claire had given birth to a second child, and provided in that manner for its sustenance. The Consul-General's information [which may have been false in *every* particular] was imparted to Byron, and they were both under the impression Shelley was the infant's father. On this last point they were certainly mistaken. Shelley was no man to live in adultery with his wife's sister-by-affinity, or to follow Rousseau's example in avoiding his parental responsibilities. Byron, however, believed his friend and fellow-poet capable of both offences ;—probably on no better grounds than that Claire, when not following her vocation of an English governess in Italy at a distance from the Shelleys, used to spend most of her time with them. Hence it was that Byron, in his

anger at her disapproval of his plan for little Allegra's education, thought of Claire (in March 1821) as a woman who, in her want of natural affection, had planted her child in a Foundling. This was the monstrous story, which came for the first time to Shelley's knowledge in August 1821, when he was staying with Byron at Ravenna. Well might Shelley, after clearing himself of the hideous imputation to Byron and enjoining Byron to disabuse Mr. and Mrs. Hoppner of their odious fancy, write to his wife, 'Imagine my despair of good, imagine how is it possible that one of so weak and sensitive a nature as mine can run further the gauntlet through this hellish society of men.' How long Byron had thought thus ill of his friend does not appear. The misconception does not seem to have been of very recent growth in March 1821. On the contrary, the matter had been an affair of interest to him and Hoppner for some time. It is neither impossible nor improbable that Byron thought thus ill of Shelley, and thought it without feeling less amiably towards him, at the very moment of his outpouring of disgustful wrath at Southey's slanderous speech. Anyhow the man who thought so lightly of Shelley's imaginary relation to Claire in March 1821, was scarcely the right man to express so much virtuous abhorrence at Southey's slander in the March of the previous year.

Notwithstanding the annoyances coming to him from the curiosity of English tourists and Genevese tattlers, the chagrin he must have felt at circumstances which compelled him to retirement, and the rage into which he was thrown by the failure of his

overture to Lady Byron, the poet enjoyed his time on the shore and waters of Lake Lemán. With his vanity and captiousness, his outbreaks of conceit and pique, Polidori soon became a serious embarrassment and source of discord to the otherwise harmonious party. But for awhile, by force of the very peculiarities of his intellect and temper, which in a few weeks occasioned his dismissal, the light-headed young doctor was a cause of diversion rather than disagreement. The poets and their poetical ladies sailed the lake, by day and night, by moonlight even to dawn, in storm as well as in sunshine. Byron wrote much (the third Canto of 'Childe Harold' was finished by the end of July, the 'Prisoner of Chillon' having been thrown off in two wet days of the previous month); Shelley by turns meditated deeply and read severely; in the hot days there were the leafy gardens for the sisters who had their books of fiction and literary enterprises for the beguilement of the hours, when their men had neither eyes for their beauty, nor ears for their sprightly talk. At night, when it was too dark or stormy for sailing on the lake, the four friends spent hours together in conversation alternately wise and brilliant.—sometimes, brilliant and wise at the same moment. The season was unpropitious from excessive rainfall; but the young people (especially the clever girls) had light hearts, and there were once and again some superbly fine days, in which all nature assuming her brightest beauty was eloquent of gladness.

When the rain had kept them prisoners to the house for several days, the tenants of the Villa Diodati, in the excitement of reading German ghost

stories, agreed to compose tales that should surpass the works of the German authors in mystery and terror. 'You and I will publish ours together, Mrs. Shelley!' cried Byron, who produced the sketch which afforded Polidori an opportunity to show his natural genius for imposture. Byron's 'Vampire' was nothing but a hint for a terrifying narrative. Mrs. Shelley's wild and entrancing romance of 'Frankenstein' was, perhaps, the most vigorous and enthralling work of prose fiction, ever written by so young a woman.—a girl in her nineteenth year. Another memorable passage of this summer with the poets covered the days which Byron and Shelley, leaving their womankind to their own devices, spent in the tour of the lake,—the tour described by the younger of the two poets in a letter known to all students of his story. The sympathy of the two companions was sustained by the admiration each felt for the powers of the other. Exploring Rousseau's peculiar country with 'Heloise' in their hands, they were for a few days the happiest mortals of the whole universe. Children of sorrow, they forgot their troubles for a brief moment, and overflowing with boyish enthusiasm lived in the purest delights of genius.

This trip was followed after a brief interval by the overtures for reconciliation, which Byron is said to have made to his wife in submission to Madame de Staël's judgment and sympathetic influence. Probably the lady was less accountable for the futile proposal than she imagined and successive writers have asserted. In spite of the animosities that had resulted in his wife's desire for the separation, the

animosities to which the quarrel had given rise, the resentment which the publication of 'The Farewell' necessarily generated in the woman of imperfect temper, and the deeper wound he knew he had inflicted at the very moment of his departure, Byron had not left England without hope of a speedy recall. It has been the fashion to speak of Byron's withdrawal to foreign lands as exile and banishment for life, and the writer of these pages has acquiesced in the fashion; but readers may not infer that the poet took ship with a feeling that his absence from England would be perpetual or even of considerable duration. The sincerest, almost the only sincere, words of the 'The Farewell' are those of the lines,—

‘ Yet, oh yet, thyself deceive not  
Love may sink by slow decay,  
But by sudden wrench, believe not  
Hearts can thus be torn away.’

In his egotism he believed that Lady Byron would suffer in the same way as he suffered from the severance. In his vanity he imagined (and perhaps rightly) that she would suffer much more acutely than he would suffer from the violent rupture. There was little genuineness in his repeated declarations, that ‘having done all in his power to persuade Lady Byron to return, and with this view put off as long as he could signing the deed of separation, that step being once taken, they were now divided for ever.’ Knowing that he had never, as the phrase goes, violated her marriage-bed, or at least had never committed any such act of conjugal infidelity to her knowledge, and believing that this extreme insult was the only crime a woman would find it difficult

to pardon in so superlative a being as himself, he left England with a secret confidence that she would relent, and relenting would beckon him to her. His notion was that she would yield on easy terms, if not at discretion, within a few months, if he left her to herself, and in the meantime did nothing further to exasperate her. On growing weary of Claire in the early autumn, he would receive the message of reconciliation. In accordance with this favourable forecast, he was careful that his measures for enjoying Jane Clermont's society in Switzerland should offer his wife no open and flagrant affront. He was at pains that they might escape her knowledge and even her suspicion. By travelling ostentatiously without a female companion, he hoped to make Lady Byron imagine that the liaison with Claire was at an end. The circumstances of Claire's trip over the English Channel would preclude suspicion that he and she were bound for the same remote capital. At Geneva his association with Claire would be so speciously veiled by the presence of her friends, the Shelleys, and by her residence under their roof, that no one would suspect the hidden fact. Geneva was far away from London in pre-railway times; and all Lady Byron would hear of his doings in the remote and obscure little capital, would be that he was living quietly and decorously in its best circles, with Madame de Stäel for his *monitress-in-chief*. Of Shelley (unknown to fashion) the poet hoped his wife would hear nothing.

It has been told how egregiously events falsified Byron's calculations and disappointed his hopes. The best circles of Geneva were closed to him; the best people of Geneva avoided him. The place was

unusually full of English, many of whom had come there for the sport of watching him and sending to England unfavourable accounts of his doings. Instead of escaping attention, his intimacy with Claire was reported with hideous exaggerations. Far, far worse things were told of him at Kirkby Mallory than that he was living with Jane Clermont in the same picturesque abode. No wonder the overture to Lady Byron was fruitless of reconciliation. No wonder that *the* letter of peace to the particular friend in England, coming from Claire's admirer and Shelley's 'familiar,' appeared to Lady Byron a shameless and heinous aggravation of all its writer's previous offences. No wonder that Byron received an answer that made him rue his folly in provoking it. The humiliation of the rebuff was the more keen and bitter because it could not be concealed from Madame de Stüel, and would therefore be known to the whole world. The insult offered to him at Coppet was a slap that would reverberate in every *salon* of Paris. The man of fine sensibility and hot temper was furious. His first act of vengeance was 'The Dream,' a lovely and elaborate falsehood, written to persuade all mankind that he had never loved the woman, whose heart he was yearning to recover. Then in a still more malignant mood he composed for her torture of heart and brain the awful, the diabolically cruel 'Incantation,' subsequently inserted into 'Manfred,'—

'Though thy slumber may be deep,  
Yet thy spirit shall not sleep ;

\* \* \* \*

'Though thou see'st me not pass by,  
Thou shalt feel me with thine eye

As a thing that, though unseen,  
 Must be near thee, and hath been ;  
 And when in that secret dread  
 Thou hast turn'd around thy head,  
 Thou shalt marvel I am not  
 As thy shadow on the spot,  
 And the power which thou dost feel  
 Shall be what thou must conceal.'

With unabated vindictiveness he went to work at the 'Marriage of Belphegor,' the prose romance in which he meant to turn the whole universe against one woman—a faulty woman, doubtless, but a very miserable one, who but for him would have been less faulty and far less miserable, possibly even a happy woman, and the good woman she certainly tried to be, with imperfect success. In wilder and more malicious frenzy, on hearing she was ill, as though her illness was at the same time a matter for his exultation, a proof of her wickedness, and an intolerable addition to the injuries she had done him, this inspired maniac railed at her in the following style (the verses being, however, withheld from publication during the author's life)—

'I am too well avenged!—but 'twas my right ;  
 Whate'er my sins might be, thou wert not sent  
 To be the Nemesis who should requite —  
 Nor did Heaven choose so near an instrument.  
 Mercy is for the merciful!—if thou  
 Hast been of such, 'twill be accorded now.  
 Thy nights are banish'd from the realms of sleep!—  
 Yes ! they may flatter thee, but thou shalt feel  
 A hollow agony which will not heal,  
 For thou art pillow'd on a curse too deep ;  
 Thou hast sown in my sorrow, and must reap  
 The bitter harvest in a woe as real !



I have had many foes, but none like thee ;  
 For 'gainst the rest myself I could defend,  
 And be avenged, or turn them into friend !  
 But thou in safe implacability  
 Hadst nought to dread—in thy own weakness shielded,  
 And in my love, which hath but too much yielded,  
 And spared, for thy sake, some I should not spare ;  
 And thus upon the world—trust in thy truth,  
 And the wild fame of my ungovern'd youth—  
 On things that were not, and on things that are—  
 Even upon such a basis thou hast built  
 A monument, whose cement is guilt !  
 The moral Clytemnestra of thy lord,  
 And hew'd down, with an unsuspected sword,  
 Fame, peace, and hope—and all the better life  
 Which, but for this cold treason of thy heart,  
 Might still have risen from out the grave of strife,  
 And found a nobler duty than to part.  
 And of thy very virtues didst thou make a vice,  
 Trafficking with them in a purpose cold,  
 For present anger, and for future gold—  
 And buying others' grief at any price.  
 And thus once enter'd into crooked ways,  
 The early truth, which was thy proper praise,  
 Did not still walk beside thee—but at times,  
 And with a breast unknowing its own crimes,  
 Deceit, averments incompatible,  
 Equivocations, and the thoughts which dwell  
 In Janus-spirits—the significant eye  
 Which learns to lie with silence—the pretext  
 Of prudence, with advantages annex'd —  
 The acquiescence in all things which tend,  
 No matter how, to the desired end —  
 All found a place in thy philosophy.  
 The means were worthy, and the end is won—  
 I would not do by thee as thou hast done.'

September 1816.

And what, the reader may well ask, had the lady

done to provoke this outpouring of disdainful wrath? Two months since she was so much the object of the poet's admiration and confidence, that his strong wish and prayer were that she would recall him to her presence and closest companionship. And now she has changed to a cold, crafty, subtle, treacherous, hypocritical slanderer. What had she done? Simply this; that having a few months since determined to part with him on account of the badness of his temper, and having subsequently received from him as gross an affront before the whole world as a woman ever received from a man of genius, and being fully informed of his manner of living in Switzerland, she declined his offer to hasten to her straight from Jane Clermont's arms.

More abuse of the same vindictive spirit came from the angry poet;—the prayer for vengeance offered in some of the stateliest and most effective stanzas of the Fourth Canto of '*Childe Harold*,' and the sarcasms of withering force and appalling vulgarity poured upon his '*moral Clytemnestra*' in '*Don Juan*.' It cannot be questioned that for his honour's sake he should never have spoken an ungenerous word of his fellow-sufferer from conjugal strife, that he dropt below the standard of gentle dignity whenever he tattled to her dishonour, and that he sunk deplorably far beneath it when he put pen to paper, for the purpose of rendering her ridiculous to those meanest readers of the great satire, who delighted only or chiefly in its disfigurements of ribaldry and uncleanness.

But it was impossible for the man of volcanic nature and tempestuous emotionality to speak coolly

when he felt hotly, to write temperately when the vultures of grief and despair were pecking at his heart. The man, whose fickleness was a kind of honesty, whilst his sincerity consisted in obedience to every transient impulse, could neither hide nor falsify the impressions of the moment. It may not be imagined that, in speaking untruly and unjustly of his wife, he was deliberately untruthful and unjust. For the moment he believed all the wild things he said of her. To himself boiling with rage, the untruths were truths whenever they passed from his heated fancy to paper. It is conceivable that he never sent them to the press without still believing them. Nor may the tempestuous fury of the utterances be thought to indicate his deepest feeling for Ada's mother. Even as ocean's unseen waters are tranquil when the waves are storm-swept, Byron's ragings against his 'moral Clytemnestra' were only the superficial ferment, covering the depths of his affection for her. The woman at whom he railed so insanely was the woman who shared with his child and sister the last tender emotions of his unruly heart.

Returning to England by way of Dijon and Havre, the Shelleys left Geneva on the 29th of August. One of the consequences of Claire's passion may still have been unknown to the younger poet and Mary, but events must have prepared them for the communication when Claire told them how likely it was she would become a mother. Allegra was no child of premature birth. Already in the fifth month of her progress towards maternity, when she turned her back on Lake Lemán, Claire did not give Byron

the parting kiss, without having spoken to him of her confident anticipation of offspring. The affair had been considered by Byron and the young girl from several points of view. It is not to Byron's discredit, under all the circumstances of the case, that he wished Claire to consent to an arrangement, by which her child would have been sent to Mrs. Leigh, for nurture with her own children. In making this proposal, the poet was no less considerate for the child, who would be well cared for in Cambridgeshire, than for Claire who would soon find her child an embarrassment and a source of discredit. The project was, however, so distasteful to Miss Clermont that it was relinquished by Byron before he had consulted Augusta on the subject. It was then settled that Claire should return to England with the Shelleys, all questions (with a single exception) touching the child's nurture being deferred till the need for considering them should be more urgent. On one point, however, Claire gained a promise from Byron. Incapable in her nineteenth year of regarding the parental obligations from the high philosophic point of view, which possibly enabled her before she was twenty-four years old to commit with light heart and easy conscience a second child to a Foundling Hospital, Claire entreated Byron that her first-born offspring should be reared under the personal surveillance of the one or other of its parents, or both of them. If it should appear well for her to relinquish the custody of her infant, she would surrender the infant to Byron, and acquiesce in any plan he might propose for its education, *provided the child should live with him*. But to no other person would she give the

charge of her offspring. Let Byron promise to gratify her in this important particular, and she would return to England with undiminished confidence in his goodness. If he would not grant her prayer, she should leave Geneva with a heavy heart,—even with regret for the blissful hours she had spent with him. To this petition, preferred so earnestly and in a conciliatory manner, Byron could not reply in the negative. The promise was given, and kept by the poet till he was induced, mainly by the Countess Guiccioli, to place the little Allegra in the conventual School at Bagna Cavallo near Ravenna, where she died of fever, at the age stated in the following inscription of the tablet which commemorates her interment at Harrow, whither her body was sent at much expense from Italy :—‘ In Memory of Allegra, Daughter of G. G. Lord Byron, who died at Bagna Cavallo, in Italy, April 20, 1822, Aged Five Years and Three Months.—“ I shall go to her, but she shall not return to me.” 2 Samuel, xii. 23.’—The precise day of the child’s birth probably is not given in this brief history in marble. Anyhow, Claire had a baby at her breast as early as the 20th January, 1817.

Born in England, Allegra remained in England with her mother and the Shelleys till the 11th of March, 1818, when they took her with them to Italy; her arrival in Milan being followed at a brief interval by her transmission to her father in Venice, when she was just a year and half old. Instead of being taken to him by Claire, the little girl came to her father’s palace in the charge of her Swiss nurse;—an arrangement that may be attributed to Byron, who may also be presumed to have insisted on it, as a good way of

intimating that, though willing to receive the child, he was not desirous of seeing the child's mother. It would have been a poor compliment to her, had he invited Claire to reign over his house, which was in truth no fit residence for a woman with any sense of feminine dignity, or feminine refinement. Claire, however, accompanied Shelley to Venice in the following August, and soon saw enough of her former lover's way of living, to be convinced that he was in no humour for a renewal of their former intimacy. If she came to Venice with any of her girlish illusion respecting his goodness and chivalry,—with the faintest hope that her presence would afford him pleasure,—the visit must have troubled her not a little. For Byron was already at the beginning of the darkest and most sordid stage of his Venetian depravity. The Palazzo Mocenigo was disreputable even in Venice. To call it a harem would be a flattery of the place and its proprietor. It would be more fairly described as the house of evil fame, where the poet received some of the coarsest and most vicious of the lowest class of Venetian womankind. Even his appearance must have shocked Claire; so greatly had it suffered from excesses that would have revolted him in his brighter time. Such was the home, such the man to whom Claire (not yet twenty-one years of age) had sent her child.

If it was not irreproachable, Byron's treatment of his illegitimate child was on the whole creditable to him. Thus much must be conceded even by his sternest censors. For awhile the by no means angelic child (she was greedy, passionate, and in her fifth year precociously vain and saucy) was his favourite

plaything and almost his only source of innocent diversion within his doors. He made a liberal provision for her in a codicil to his will ; and when he determined to educate her in the Catholic faith, and for that purpose sent her to Bagna Cavallo, he was certainly actuated by sincere concern for the child's welfare. Even the Shelleys, with all their aversion to clerical influence, were of opinion that as a temporary expedient his action in sending his daughter to a Catholic school was justifiable and even judicious and conscientious. But Claire took a very different view of his conduct. Though Byron does not appear to have made any promises of enduring devotion, the romantic girl had not yielded to his addresses without imagining, in her simplicity, that an auspicious fate designed her to be Lady Byron's successor,—in fact, that she would be to him all her sister-by-affinity was already, and all she subsequently became to Shelley,—the sure holder of his heart, the mother of his children, and, in case of Lady Byron's opportune death, his wife in every sense. On discovering how greatly she had exaggerated her power over him, how strangely she had misconceived her position towards him, the fond and foolish girl imagined that his passion for her would revive on the appearance of their child,—that at least the child would be the enduring link of its parents' lives. It seemed to her that, should those lives be severed by any other cause than death, the child would be an influence operating for their reunion. All this was present to Claire's mind when, speaking chiefly from a higher motive and for a less selfish purpose, she begged that her child might be reared

under the personal observation of the one or the other of its parents. An inmate of Byron's house, the child would be a reason why its mother could not be lightly denied access to his presence. Living with her, the child would at least dispose Byron, even if it would not constrain him, to maintain intercourse with its mother.

By sending the little girl to Bagna Cavallo, Byron extinguished Claire's hope that Allegra would restore her parents to relations of mutual confidence and affection. By the same act he also put an end to Claire's hope that Allegra would be trained to love and honour her mother. Reared in the Catholic faith Allegra would conceive aversion for her mother, as a free-thinker and unbeliever,—living in heresy more hateful and impious than the heresy of Protestantism. The arrangement was the more exasperating to Claire, because she had good reason to regard it as the result of Madame Guiccioli's influence over Byron, to whose mobile affection Claire regarded herself as having a kind of reversionary title, by virtue of the child she had given him. At Venice Byron smiled on several mistresses between the death of his fleeting passion for Claire and the birth of his stronger and more lasting attachment to the Italian countess. But all these women (her inferiors in culture, quality and even in beauty) Claire could regard as mere toys of the moment to her child's father. The least disreputable of them was a tradesman's wife, in whose house the poet had lodged. Most of them were creatures picked out of cellars or wine-shops. Some of them could neither write nor read. The most notorious of them, Margarita Cogni (the Fornarina with flashing



eyes :—the baker's 'baggage' with a bold face and saucy tongue) was a mere blackguard in petticoats. No one of them had given the poet offspring. It was impossible for any one of these creatures to hold his affection for any considerable time, or to recover his fancy after once losing it. Claire never felt herself utterly and hopelessly superseded by any of these vulgar women. But the Italian Countess—girlish, beautiful, and Byron's equal in rank—was no charmer for Claire to regard with a scornful sense of superiority or an affectation of indifference. On the contrary, should the Countess give her protector a child, Claire saw an end of her failing hope of recovering Byron through his tenderness for her offspring. Nor was the Countess without a sense of peril from the possible revival of the poet's affection for Allegra's mother, who had beauty and cleverness, and belonged to the aristocracy of talent, though by birth she was only a London tradesman's daughter. There was no love lost between these two women. Knowing everything about one another, they lived in mutual fear and animosity. When a lady fibs, it is the part of civility to assume that she speaks from insufficient information. When she wrote of Mrs. Shelley's relative as an intrusive young person who forced herself on Byron's notice at Geneva, though he would gladly have avoided her, the Countess was speaking from insufficient information. Familiar with every particular of Claire's intercourse with Byron, the Countess detested her ;—hating her all the more because in the lightness with which Byron had tossed her from him (notwithstanding her child) there was a forewarning of the treatment in store for her successor, who could

not flatter him with offspring. Dislike of Claire may have been one of the Countess's motives for urging Byron to send Allegra to school, and educate her to think her mother a heretic,—a misbeliever of an especially odious heresy. To the last the woman of noble birth and Italian blood detested the woman of English birth and southern temperament. When in her old age she put on paper the monstrous assertion that she had Byron's authority for saying he had *never* seduced any woman, the Countess was aware how the words would sting Claire (in her old age at Florence) should they come to her notice. After considering this neat and final thrust at poor Claire (old, poor, neglected, though never quite friendless), no one will deny that the Marquise de Boissy (rich, prosperous, and fêted) was—a woman of genius!

Under the circumstances it is not wonderful that the impulsive and hot-tempered Claire (now a young woman of twenty-three years of age) poured out the full vial of her wrath on the head of the man who had broken his promise that her child should be educated under the personal care of one or the other parent. No wonder she taunted the nobleman with breaking his word of honour, passed with the utmost solemnity to the generous and artless girl, who had loved him in the belief that he was good. No wonder that she charged him with meanness and cruelty; that she asked him with scornful sarcasm whether the purity of his principles forbade him to cherish his natural daughter with paternal tenderness; that she declared the education given to girls in conventual schools was chiefly accountable for the ignorance and profligacy of Italian women, whose licentiousness

made them dishonourable and grievous to society; that she told him Lady Byron (ever watchful of his movements and condemned by many people for casting him from her) would hear with delight of his behaviour to Allegra and Allegra's mother, and rejoice in the honourable security of herself and Ada; that she assured him the announcement of his purpose towards the child in his power would be received in England as a justification of the severest censures passed upon him by his bitterest enemies! Passing from passionate invective to plaintive entreaty, Claire entreated Byron that he would at least give her back the child she had committed to him, so that she might educate her as an English girl ought to be educated,—in a way that would at least afford the child a chance of growing to be an affectionate daughter to the only one of her parents who really loved her. By consenting to her prayer Claire told Byron he would be the gainer in credit and (with a sarcastic note on the *word* which she felt would go straight to the poet's heart)—in *purse*. The child should never again cost him a penny. She (Claire) would put her to a good English school, and pay her charges there. She was able to do so,—would gladly do so. The school should be chosen by his own friends in England. Yet further, the petitioner would bind herself to see the child no oftener than *his* friends should think fit. But passion, sarcasm, pathos, entreaty, were all in vain. The father was unyielding. The mother might as well have offered her supplications to a block of stone; the justification of his obduracy being his belief that Claire had no strong affection for her

offspring or any one but herself,—had planted one of her children in a Foundling,—was at that very time living in concubinage with Shelley under Mrs. Shelley's roof,—was in fact an equally shameless and saucy actress in the whole affair. He stood firm. And Allegra was sent to Bagna Cavallo,—to die there in the following year.

To return to the Villa Diodati, where Byron had a few days to himself between the departure of the Shelleys and the arrival of Hobhouse and Scrope Davies. Pained to learn how inauspiciously matters had gone at Geneva for the poet's reputation, the new comers were delighted at the change for the better in their friend's health, temper, spirits, habits of life, and appearance. They observed with pleasure the poet's total abstinence from brandy, in which he had indulged far too freely in London during the domestic troubles. No longer drinking soda-water to excess, Byron was living (as he had lived ever since his coming to Switzerland) with a strict temperance, bordering on severe abstemiousness, in eating and drinking. His hours of going to rest and rising from bed were not reprehensibly late; he was neither passionate nor perverse; and he talked calmly of his misfortunes, even of his wife's last exhibition of cruelty in declining to receive him again into her favour, without giving his friends any of those violent hysterical ejaculations with which he had so often startled and even terrified them in Piccadilly. Though some of his remarks on 'Glenarvon' and Lady Caroline Lamb were animated with indignation, he spoke of the book and its writer without immoderate anger. Upon the whole he looked happy and was happy.

In the later time of September (from the 17th to the 29th inclusive), when Serope Davies had gone off for England, the poet and Hobhouse made the thirteen days' tour in the Bernese Oberland, particulars of which may be found in Moore's 'Extracts' from the diary which Byron kept during the excursion for the entertainment of his sister. After perusing her brother's narrative—overflowing with evidence that he had enjoyed the trip with the same boyish heartiness, that distinguished his enjoyment of the tour round Lake Lemman with Shelley—Mrs. Leigh (notwithstanding her knowledge of his disposition) must have been astonished by the suddenness, with which he passed in the Journal's concluding paragraph from gladness to gloom. 'But in all this,' says the writer, turning from the sunshine of his unconstrained cheerfulness and even hilarity, and plunging instantaneously into the blackest depths of melancholy; 'but in all this—the recollection of bitterness, and more especially of recent and more home desolation, which must accompany me through life, have preyed upon me here; and neither the music of the shepherd, the crashing of the avalanche, nor the torrent, the mountain, the glacier, the forest, nor the cloud, have for one moment lightened the weight upon my heart, nor enabled me to lose my own wretched identity in the majesty, and the power, and the glory, around, above, and beneath me.' There is something comical in this sudden drop into despair of the young man, who had just been snow-balling Hobhouse on the Wengern Alp and laughing till he almost cracked his sides at the repeated falls of his mountain guide. The wail, however, was no mere affectation of melancholy.

Ludicrously untruthful as to his feelings during the trip,—no less so than his wild indictment of his false and malignant wife,—the woeful words were sincere to the impression of the moment. High and long-maintained elation of spirits was succeeded by corresponding depression ; and in the sadness that possessed his soul, it really seemed to him that he had made the tour in deepest gloom.

The tour had brought him back to the Château Diodati. A few days later (after a farewell dinner at Coppet), his sojourn in Switzerland was a thing of the past. On the 15th of October, 1816, he was writing gaily from Milan to Murray about the love-letters of Lucretia Borgia and Cardinal Bembo.

## CHAPTER II.

## VENICE :—BYRON'S DEPRAVATION.

Marianna Segati—Convent of St. Lazarus—Madame Albrizzi and Madame Benzoni—Malarial Fever—Byron at Home—'Count Maddalo'—Allegra at Venice—The Pecuniary Resources—His Literary Earnings—Sale of Newstead—Poet and Salesman—Gallops on the Lido—Sordid Dissipation—The Poet's Home-sickness and Irritability—His Alarming Illness—His Recovery and Reappearance in Society.

FROM Milan the friends went to Verona, and from Verona to Venice, where Byron became the tenant of the best rooms in the house of a linendraper, in an extremely narrow street,—the *Spezieria* of Moore's narrative, the *Merceria* of Karl Elze's text. To give the tradesman a rank befitting the honour about to be conferred on his wife (a young woman, with large black eyes, an Italian countenance, and dark glossy hair resembling Lady Jersey's tresses in curl and colour) Byron styled him 'a Merchant of Venice who is a good deal occupied in business.' Whilst the draper was serving his customers, Byron made love to Marianna Segati, the young person who in one of her natural endowments was comparable with the English Countess and in another surpassed the antelope; and as the merchant had fewer customers and less credit than he needed for his affairs, he was sufficiently prudent to give his shop more attention than he gave his wife. The several parties to the

triangular arrangement, which gave Marianna a niche in the temple of fame, acted with equal promptitude and harmony. Coming to Venice in the middle of November, Byron was on the seventeenth of the month writing rapturously to Moore about the lady's merits. For several months Marianna was a very goddess to the poet, who, finding music in her voice, beauty in her face, sunlight in her eyes, humour in her persiflage, and voluptuous grace in her form, paid the price of her concessions with ungrudging liberality. Forbearing to murmur at the 'inflammation of his weekly bills,' the poet relieved Segati's financial distress with timely munificence, and made presents of jewellery to Marianna,—on one occasion giving her the set of diamonds, which she sold with an unromantic alacrity, that enabled him a few weeks later to buy them again for her encouragement in thrift.

Had she been of noble birth and style, the poet's admiration of his pretty landlady could not have been more fervid or fruitful of delicate homage; and the puerile delight with which he paraded his easy conquest to the light-tongued Venetians must have reminded Hobhouse of the effrontery with which Lord Byron of Trinity had in former time called everyone's attention to his girl in boy's clothing. Providing himself with a gondola, and taking a box at the Phœnix Theatre, he was seldom seen at places of public amusement without his mistress, whose lessons in the Venetian dialect he repaid with instruction in the art of loving. 'I am still,' he wrote to Murray on the 27th of December, 1816, 'dreadfully in love with the Adriatic lady whom I spoke of in a former letter; and love in this part of the world is no sinecure.'



Devotion to this siren of the shop-board had caused him to decline accompanying Hobhouse to Rome, where however the friends met in the ensuing May. At the same time he found a worthier field of diversion at the convent of St. Lazarus, whither he went daily in his gondola to gossip with the monks and aid them in the composition of their English-Armenian grammar, towards the publication of which work he contributed a thousand francs.

He went also to other places besides the Armenian monastery, where he could not introduce Marianna. No longer preferring seclusion to society, now that he was in a city of lighter morals than Geneva, he attended the Count Governor's receptions, where the Patriarch of Venice smiled benedictions on a motley crew of Austrians and Germans, very much in the style of the Bishop of Winchester in the drawing-rooms of Mayfair. At the same time he became a regular frequenter of the circle of Isabella Teotochi, Countess Albrizzi, known for her writings and conversational brightness as the De Stäel of Venice, 'not young' (he wrote to Moore on 24th December, 1816), 'but a very learned, unaffected, good-natured woman, very polite to strangers, and, I believe, not at all dissolute as most of the women are.' Whilst the lady won this meed of cold and dubious approval from her famous visitor, the De Stäel of Venice wrote rapturously of his genius and personal endowments. 'It would be to little purpose,' she exclaims in her book of 'Portraits,' 'to dwell upon the mere beauty of a countenance in which the expression of an extraordinary mind was so conspicuous. What serenity was seated on the forehead, adorned with fine

chestnut hair, light, curling, and disposed with such art, that the art was hidden in the imitation of most pleasing nature ! What varied expression in his eyes ! They were of the azure colour of the heavens, from which they seemed to derive their origin. His teeth, in form, in colour, in transparency, resembled pearls ; but his cheeks were too delicately tinged with the hue of the pale rose. His neck, which he was in the habit of keeping uncovered as much as the usages of society permitted, seemed to have been formed in a mould, and was very white. His hands were as beautiful as if they had been the works of art.' It was thus that the Italian Countess spoke of her idol in the sketch, which he declined to correct for the press, or even to peruse in manuscript, and at the instigation of caprice or caution begged her to give to the flames, instead of the world. Offended with the lady for not taking his advice on a matter about which he had a moral title to command, Byron withdrew from her circle, and to her lively chagrin went over to the *salon* of her rival, the Countess Benzoni, where—after a period that without extravagance may be designated the period of his darkest depravity—he fell in love with Teresa Guiccioli, who wrote to Moore after her hero's death, ' His noble and exquisitely beautiful countenance, the tone of his voice, his manners, the thousand enchantments that surrounded him, rendered him so different and so superior a being to any whom I had hitherto seen, that it was impossible he should not have left the most profound impression on me. From that evening, during the whole of my subsequent stay at Venice, we met every day.'

The Carnival of 1817 had not ended, before Byron, suffering from the malaria of the canals, was sickening for another severe assault of the same disease which had so nearly killed him when he was in Greece, and which, after repeated attacks on a constitution fretted by fitful dissipation and broken by persistence in the suicidal diet to which so frequent reference has been made in these pages, laid him on his bed of death in Missolonghi. The severity of his present illness was due in some degree to nervous prostration, resulting from the late hours and violent excitements of the Carnival, into whose dissipations he had hurled himself with the wild vehemence and delirious energy of a libertine, bent on indemnifying himself by extravagant excess for previous privations of pleasure. The man who had lived so long out of the world at Geneva, and had spent the subsequent weeks with more than his customary abstinence from festal extravagances, now leapt into the licentious freedom of the universal holiday with a passionate appetite for gaiety,—even as the drunkard or gambler springs to the bottle or the hazard-table after a long term of restraint from his favourite enjoyment. ‘The Carnival,’ he wrote to Moore on 28 February, 1817, ‘that is, the latter part of it, and sitting up late o’ nights, had knocked me up a little.’ On the third of the following month, he writes to Murray, ‘Ever since the conclusion of the Carnival I have been unwell, and have hardly stirred out of the house. . . . My malady is a sort of lowish fever, originating from what my “pastor and master,” Jackson, would call “taking too much out of one’s self !”’ Three weeks later (25 March, 1817) he says to Moore, ‘I have

been very ill with a slow fever, which at last took to flying, and became as quick as need be. But, at length, after a week of half-delirium, burning skin, thirst, hot head-ache, horrible pulsation, and no sleep, by the blessing of barley-water, and refusing to see any physician, I recovered. It is an epidemic of the place, which is annual, and visits strangers.' That the sufferer recognised the identity of the fever which struck him down in the Morea with the fever which gave Marianna an opportunity for displaying her nursely skill, appears from a note he penned with a weak hand to his London publisher.

Shaking off the fever, which was raising the mortality of Venice far above its usual unhealthy average, Byron in the middle of April escaped from the city of death to Rome (pausing by the way at Ferrara, Florence and Foligno),—the trip that gave us the finest stanzas of the Fourth Canto of 'Childe Harold.' From Rome (where the poet dined with Lord Lansdowne, sate for the familiar bust to Thorwaldsen, and rode to the various points of interest on the saddle-horses he had brought with him from Venice) Hobhouse would fain have lured Byron to Naples ; but the man of feeling was pining too keenly for Marianna to acquiesce in the proposal for an extension of his tour, and of his term of absence from the young woman who, having captivated him by her lovely face and musical voice, had won a deeper corner of his heart by the affectionate assiduity of her ministrations to him during his severe illness. This longing for the woman, whom he parted from lightly enough some months later, even caused him to shorten his stay in Rome, after making up his

mind to remain there till the beginning of June. Inviting her to meet him on his backward way (an invitation that was obeyed with alacrity), Byron returned with Marianna at his side to her husband's house on the 28th May. In the middle of the next month, the poet and his mistress (without the draper's presence, but doubtless with his approval) were living at La Mira on the Brenta in the house (at an easy distance from the City of the Sea) that Byron henceforth used as a place of rural retreat till the close of his sojourn at Venice ;—the same villa to which he carried Teresa Guiccioli, some two years after he had hinted to Marianna that it would be well for her to leave it.

The precise time, at which Byron and the draper's wife parted company, does not appear. Nor is anything known of the circumstances that put an end to the liaison. The probable explanation of the matter is that Byron grew weary of her, as he was wont to grow weary of the objects of his sentimental tenderness, and that Marianna was pricked, by the signs of his growing disaffection, to ebullitions of anger. Whatever its immediate cause, and however sudden at last, the severance certainly was not premature. After re-purchasing the diamonds so recently given her, Byron may well have thought it time for him to seek for another recipient of his favours.

That Marianna Segati was no woman to endure slights meekly and smile under a sense of injury may be inferred from a scene of which Byron was a spectator in the opening stage of their friendship. The Carnival of 1817 was at its height, and the poet's passion for his new mistress was the talk of Venice,

when he received from a gondolier a note inviting him to meet the fair writer, who had withheld her name from the billet. His reply was that he should be alone at home at ten o'clock of the ensuing night, or at the *ridotto* two hours later, and would gladly speak with his anonymous correspondent at either place. At the earlier hour he was in his lodgings (Marianna having gone with her husband to a *conversazione*), when a young and pretty girl entered his room of audience and lost no time in informing him that she was Marianna's sister-in-law, and wished to speak with him respecting his intimacy with the lady, to whom she was so nearly related. The conversation had not proceeded far in Italian and Romanic, when Marianna Segati with fury in her handsome face and dark eyes rushed into the room, seized her meddlesome sister-in-law by the hair, and gave her sixteen violent slaps on the face ;—'slaps,' Byron wrote to Moore, 'which would have made your ear ache only to hear their echo.' After seeing the back of her enemy, who fled instantly from the scene and spectator of her sharp chastisement, Marianna went off into hysterics in the arms of her admirer, who was still bringing her round with eau-de-Cologne and endearments when Segati (the linendraper) entered the room, to make observations that should be serviceable to him in coming to terms with the disturber of his domestic happiness. The woman's true nature revealed itself in this outbreak of rage. Possessing beauty of face and figure, some cleverness of speech, the taste in dress and other matters of personal adornment to be looked for in a smart young milliner, and the power of singing to be regarded almost as a

matter of course in persons of her race and clime, Marianna Segati was a mere creature of the common bourgeoisie. It shows how much Byron had already suffered, how much more he was likely to suffer, from close intimacy with so ordinary and unrefined a woman, that he was agreeably diverted by her behaviour to her intrusive sister-in-law, and, worse still! was so highly amused and delighted by the whole affair, as to think it worth his while and consistent with his dignity and poetic sensibility, to give his brother in poesy (Moore) a long account of so sordid a business.

It would have been to his advantage,—or rather let us say, it would have been less to his disadvantage,—in his dealings with women of Marianna's low quality, and the viler women for whom she may be said to have debased him, had Byron been able to approach them with passion altogether divorced from sympathy and every kind of emotional tenderness. Had he regarded her as nothing more than an instrument of diversion, his unedifying association with Marianna Segati would not have disposed him for another and greater descent in the scale of refinement, and prepared him for communion with mistresses of ruder manners and worse morals. Less harm would have come to him from the creatures, who composed the vagrant harem of the Palazzo Mocenigo, had he possessed the cynical hardness and spiritual grossness to think of them as animals, differing from the brutes only in shape and speech. But the softness of his nature prevented him from taking so disdainful a view of the *jilles-de-joie* who frequented his palace on the Grand Canal. However

dissolute she might be, the woman he regarded with passion became for a moment the object of an affection that was no less tender than transient. To call it love would be a profanation ; but no less sacred word would adequately describe the fleeting sentiment of perverted sympathy and debasing admiration with which he cherished these miserable beings, after descending from the moral elevation of culture and genius to their almost lowest level of human existence. Hence his strange and even appalling delight in their exhibitions of caprice and jealousy, in the humour of their sorry jests, and in the piquancy of vulgar persiflage. In the whole story of our literature few things can be found more painfully humiliating and dismally shocking to readers of average taste and sensibility than Byron's confessions of delight in Margarita Cogni's colloquial sprightliness, and the pains he took to record some of her sauciest speeches :—speeches that, heard from the lips of any wanton walker of the London pavements, would cause decent people to hasten beyond earshot.

After restoring Marianna Segati to her rightful owner, Byron had established himself in his stately palace (the Palazzo Mocenigo) on the Grand Canal, and was fast sinking to the darkest depths of his Venetian depravity, when the Shelleys and Jane Clermont paid him the visit to which reference has already been made. Occupying the villa I Capuccini, near Este (which Byron had recently hired of Hoppner, and now put at the service of Claire and her friends), Shelley spent the several weeks in the neighbourhood of Venice, during which he wrote 'Julian and Mad-dalo,'—a work scarcely more memorable as a monu-



ment of its author's genius than valuable as a piece of Byron's history. 'Count Maddalo,' the author remarks in the introductory note to his poem. 'is a Venetian nobleman of ancient family and of good fortune, who, without mixing much in the society of his countrymen, resides chiefly at his magnificent palace in that city. He is a person of the most consummate genius, and capable, if he would direct his energies to such an end, of becoming the redeemer of his degraded country. But it is his weakness to be proud : he derives, from a comparison of his own extraordinary mind with the dwarfish intellects that surround him, an intense apprehension of the nothingness of human life. His passions and his powers are incomparably greater than those of other men ; and, instead of the latter having been used in curbing the former, they have mutually lent each other strength. His ambition preys upon itself, for want of objects which it can consider worthy of exertion. I say that Maddalo is proud, because I can find no other word to express the concentrated and impatient feelings which consume him ; but it is on his own hopes and affections only that he seems to trample, for in social life no human being can be more gentle, patient, and unassuming, than Maddalo. He is cheerful, frank, and witty. His more serious conversation is a kind of intoxication ; men are held by it as by a spell. He has travelled much, and there is an inexpressible charm in his relation of his adventures in different countries.' This notable estimate of Byron's character and powers, formed at a moment when they were seen even by Shelley under disadvantageous circumstances, is followed in the

poem by this pleasant picture of the child, who had now been for some six months under her father's care :—

‘ The following morn was rainy, cold, and dim,  
Ere Maddalo arose, I called on him ;  
And, whilst I waited, with his child I played,  
A lovelier toy sweet Nature never made ;  
A serious, subtle, wild, yet gentle being ;  
Graceful without design, and unforeseeing ;  
With eyes—oh speak not of her eyes ! which seem  
Twin mirrors of Italian heaven, yet gleam  
With such deep meaning as we never see  
But in the human countenance. With me  
She was a special favourite : I had nursed  
Her fine and feeble limbs when she came first  
To this bleak world ; and she yet seemed to know  
On second sight her ancient playfellow,  
Less changed than she was by six months or so,  
For, after her first shyness was worn out,  
We sate there, rolling billiard balls about,—  
When the Count entered.’

It has been already remarked that Allegra was by no means the angelic child Byronic enthusiasts have delighted to imagine her. If she had inherited from her sire the blue eyes together with other personal characteristics, that were conspicuous elements of *his* infantile loveliness, she had also inherited from the same parent the vehement temper, the wilfulness and probably also the greediness, which distinguished her from an early season of her brief existence. That she was the lovely toy Shelley declared her in her second year can be readily imagined. But that she was not altogether lovely at a later time appears from the testimony of her father, and also of Mr. Hoppner who, having enjoyed even better opportunities than her father

for observing the child's propensities, wrote to the 'Athenæum' in 1869, 'She was not by any means an amiable child, nor was Mrs. Hoppner or I particularly fond of her.'

The time has come for another glance at the poet's financial position, and a precise statement of his pecuniary resources during the earlier years of his exile. There is the more need for this statement, as he has been charged with squandering his wife's money on his pleasures in Italy.

Had he been disposed to live in wasteful luxury on Lady Byron's fortune, he could not have done so, for the simple reason that her modest fortune was in the hands of her trustees. Till her mother's death in February 1822, Lady Byron had no considerable possessions,—nothing, that her husband could touch. After Lady Noel's death, indeed, Byron took his lawful share of the income accruing to himself and his wife from the Wentworth property, in accordance with the arrangement of the arbitrators appointed for the equitable division of a revenue of some seven or eight thousand a-year. Whatever may be urged on the question of delicacy and chivalrous magnanimity, he was under no obligation of honour to do otherwise. It would have been quixotic generosity on his part to decline the tardy enrichment, that was a poor compensation for the material injury he had sustained from the luckless marriage, which had in other respects been so disastrous to his interests. It has been shown that Miss Milbanke was no great match for him at the time of the first offer, when his pecuniary prospects and almost cloudless celebrity would have justified him in seeking the hand of a woman of

greater wealth and higher rank. It has been shown that even on the bridal day, when his circumstances were somewhat less auspicious and his embarrassments more urgent, she still remained a poor match for a man of his eminence and estate. It has been seen that he made a large settlement upon her,—a settlement that may almost be called prodigious, so greatly disproportionate was it to her fortune and his own estate,—a settlement that enriched her for so long a period after his death. One result of this settlement was that Lady Byron's trustees, after the sale of Newstead to Colonel Wildman, precluded him from the expansion of income he might have obtained from an investment on mortgage of Lord Blessington's Dublin property at 6 per cent per annum. As Lady Byron took the full advantage of the marriage-settlement, which affected her husband so injuriously, it is not obvious why he should have forborne to take the share of the revenue from the Wentworth property, which he had in a certain sense purchased with that deed of endowment. Possibly some readers of this page may share Moore's regret that the poet did not persist in his original purpose never to touch a guinea of his wife's money. But whatever cause there may be for regret, there appears no ground for severe censure. Byron's action in the matter differs widely from that of the man who, having given her nothing, insists on taking much from the woman with whom he is at war; for he had paid heavily for the marriage, which cost him so much in happiness and honour. Anyhow the event of 1822 had no effect on his way of living from the summer of 1816 till the sale of Newstead placed him in more than easy circumstances.

Nor is he chargeable with spending on his selfish enjoyments the money that came to him from Lady Byron's possessions during the last two years of his existence. For a considerable period before Lady Noel's death, he had lived well within his income, saving his money (sometimes saving it in ways that justly exposed him to imputations of avarice and niggardliness), for the achievement of one or another of his several romantic projects for distinguishing himself as a man of action. The enterprise to which he eventually devoted the money from his wife's revenue was the cause to which he gave his own life.

The failure of his overture from Geneva for reconciliation with his wife may have been in some degree accountable for Byron's dismissal of the notion that his nobility forbade him to use his literary emoluments for his personal comfort. Reunion with Lady Byron, attended with a readjustment of his affairs by the aid of her father and mother, would probably have encouraged him to persist in a resolution which he could not have abandoned without rudely shocking their feelings. In England and with the Noels about him, it would probably have been out of his power to get the better of the false sentiment, from which he liberated himself with difficulty in a foreign land. Even under the circumstances most favourable to his independence and discretion, he had a sharp conflict with his pride before he came to a wise resolve on the question of honour, which his financial embarrassments had for some time been forcing upon his consideration. On coming to Venice with no readier source of sufficient income than his genius, Byron determined to do what four years since he would have

blushed to think of doing, what two years since his enemies on the London press had accused him of doing, what his defenders on the same press had warmly declared him innocent and even incapable of doing,—to use the earnings of his pen, precisely as he used the rents from his Nottinghamshire farms, and had used the money lent him on extortionate terms by London usurers. Readers may well smile at the time Byron took and the pain he underwent in coming to this determination. But they must remember that the question which the poet was so slow in answering so sensibly, was by no means the simple question it may appear at the present day. Seventy years since had the opinion of the whole English nobility been taken individually on the question whether a nobleman could without dishonour write for money, whether in plain terms he could without disgrace habitually take wages for the work of his pen, it is probable that no single voice would have answered in the affirmative,—that on the contrary every reply would have been an indignant ‘no.’ Had a far larger class of Englishmen, the whole body of the gentlemen of Great Britain, been polled on the question whether a peer of the realm might follow literature as a way of livelihood, ninety-and-nine out of every hundred of them would have answered unhesitatingly in the negative. And the matter just now in debate with Byron was not, how he might or might not use the money coming to him now and then from occasional exertions of his literary faculty, but whether he might habitually apply to his private use and personal advantage the strong and steady stream of affluence flowing to him in regular current from the sale of his writings. Whether a nobleman might be an author

by profession was a large question, involving several nice questions. In the world's history the question had never been raised before. England had produced royal authors by the dozen, noble authors by the hundred, but never a nobleman brought face to face with the question whether he might and should earn, as an author by profession, an income adequate to his rank, and apply it to his private necessities. In answering this question by open action, directly in opposition to the prejudices of his order and the sentiment of all English society, Byron displayed at least as much moral courage as any nobleman would have shown in declining a challenge on the ground of his conscientious disapproval of duelling.

The magnitude of the revenue that came to Byron from his pen during the five years immediately ensuing his withdrawal from England may be seen from the following data, taken from Murray's published list of payments to the poet, and the same publisher's 'Chronology of Lord Byron's Life and Works:'

1816 A.D.	Siege of Corinth	...	...	£525
"	Parisina...	...	...	525
"	3rd Canto of Childe Harold	...	...	1,575
"	Prisoner of Chillon	...	...	525
1817	Lament of Tasso	...	...	315
"	Manfred...	...	...	315
"	Beppo	...	...	525
1818	4th Canto of Childe Harold	...	...	2,100
"	Mazeppa	...	...	525
1819	Don Juan I., II.	...	...	1,525
1820	Doge of Venice...	...	...	1,050
1821	Don Juan III., IV., V...	...	...	1,525
"	Sardanapalus, Cain, Foscari	...	...	1,100
—	Sundries	...	...	450
				5)12,580

Average Receipts for five years...£2,516

What portion of the payments put together under 'Sundries' was paid in the first two years of this period does not appear; but at least 200*l.* of the 450*l.* (Sundries) came to the poet before he had been two full years away from England. As the poem was not finished till October 1818, the price (525*l.*) for 'Mazeppa' may not be included in the receipts of these first two years. The poet's receipts for the two years (the 1050*l.* for the 'Siege of Corinth' and 'Parisina' being included in them, though the poems were written in England) may be computed at 6605*l.*,—a trifle over 3300*l.* a year. In considering the value of this income at the time when it was earned, readers must bear in mind the greatness of the depreciation of gold during the last sixty years. 3300*l.* in the years 1816-17 and 1817-18 were at least equivalent to 5000*l.* of English gold at the present time.

Other matters must also be had in consideration by readers who would get a fair view of Byron's pecuniary position in the two years, closing with the sale of Newstead to Colonel Wildman,—the sale (negotiated in November 1817 and completed in the summer of 1818) that has been already mentioned as placing the poet in affluence. From his coming to Geneva at the close of May 1816 to the end of the year he lived economically. During the earlier part of his residence on the shore of Lake Lemán he certainly kept no horses. At Venice we have seen the poet living in lodgings for a considerable period, before he took the villa at La Mira. Cheap at the present day, living at Venice in Byron's time was marvellously cheap in comparison with living in London. Perhaps all Europe contained no capital



of gaiety and fashion, where the lover of pleasure could live luxuriously at a smaller expenditure. Byron's box for the season at the Phoenix theatre cost him only a trifle ; the prices for the best places at the Opera were insignificant ; the cost of his gondola was a bagatelle in comparison with the expense of a London carriage ; the riot and fun of the ridotto were to be had for a few francs a visit ; the total sum of the wages given to his Italian servants fell short of what he would have paid an English butler ; his palace on the Grand Canal (not taken, by the way, till the purchase-money of Newstead was on the point of being paid) he held at a yearly rent of two hundred louis, which was deemed an exorbitant rent for one of the stateliest houses of Venice. Moreover, Byron was habitually economical in several matters on which the indulgent are prone to be lavish. Whilst dullness of palate denied him the finest enjoyments, it saved him from the heaviest expenses of the epicure. The man, who could not distinguish between stale fish and fresh fish, had small need of a consummate *chef*, and no disposition to squander money on delicate dishes and the costlier wines. Faring like an anchorite when he was heedful for his figure, he was content with common viands and ordinary drinks when he lived freely. It is not wonderful, therefore, that with an income of 3300*l.* a-year before the sale of Newstead, he could live showily and distinguish himself by keeping saddle-horses at Venice.

Having decided after a sharp struggle with his pride to follow as a gainful profession what he had hitherto regarded only as an elegant pastime, it was natural for Byron to overact the part of the mercenary

poet and give undue prominence to the prudential motive of his industry, alike in his dealings with his publisher and in correspondence with his brethren of the tuneful craft. It was not enough for him to take and spend the money sent him by his publisher. Together with the new purpose he assumed the new part of an author greedy for gain, suspicious of his publisher's fairness, haggling for better terms, fighting for the extra shillings that turn pounds to guineas, set not only on making money, but on making as much money as possible. Sometimes this grasping game is played with good-humour, but quite as often with pugnacity and insolence. After announcing the completion of the Fourth Canto of 'Childe Harold' he writes to Murray (July 20, 1817): 'And now for our barter. What do you bid? eh? you shall have samples, an' it so please you; but I wish to know what I am to expect (as the saying is) in these hard times.' To get a good bid for the Canto, he hints that he may throw 'some odd matters to the lot—translations or slight originals;' but he will not part with a single 'make-weight' till the publisher has done 'the handsome thing.' There is hard fighting between the author and publisher before they come to terms; the man of 'the trade' offering 1500 guineas whilst the man of poetry demands 2500 guineas,—no excessive price, he avers, 'if Mr. Eustace was to have had two thousand for a poem on education; if Mr. Moore is to have three thousand for "Lalla," &c.; if Mr. Campbell is to have three thousand for his prose on poetry.' Far be it from him to say a word in disparagement of those gentlemen, whose works are considerably longer than his Fourth

Canto of 'The Childe,' but he asks 2300 guineas for the Canto and won't take less. Eventually the hagglers split the difference; and Byron gets 2100*l.*,—a stupendous payment for so few verses. In the first month of the following year (January 8, 1818) Byron opens another battle for terms with the rhyming letter that ends with the lines,

'For the man, "poor and shrewd,"  
With whom you'd conclude  
A compact without more delay,  
Perhaps some such pen is  
Still extant in Venice;  
But please, sir, to mention *your pay*.'

By this time the ring of money on the shop-counter had become musical to the ear of the poet, who on relinquishing the rôle of the noble amateur of letters, skilful with the pen and disdainful of its profits, overplayed thus curiously the character of a writer for wages. 'I once wrote,' he assures his publisher in an epistle dated from Venice on July 17, 1818, 'from the fulness of my mind and the love of fame (not as an *end*, but as a *means*, to obtain that influence over men's minds which is power in itself and in its consequences), and now from habit and from avarice.' Persisting with equal vehemence and insincerity in this part of a mercenary scribe, he delighted in it even to the moment when, suddenly chucking up the pen, he seized the sword and hastened to Greece to figure as the liberator of an oppressed people. 'John Murray, my patron and paymaster,' he cried to Shelley at Pisa, 'says my plays won't act. I don't mind that, for I told him they were not written for the stage—but he adds, my

poesy won't sell; that I do mind, for I have an "itching palm." A day or two later this poet with an itching palm observed to Trelawny, in a vein of petty boastfulness of his gains from 'Don Juan,' 'To-night I shall write thirty more lines, and that will finish a canto—a thousand guineas. Murray now says pounds: I won't be stinted of my sizings. Murray told Tom Moore he was no judge of the morality; but sermons did not sell, and the "Don" had a "devil of a sale."'

In the 'Diary of an Invalid' Matthews remarks, 'In Venice there are only eight horses; four are of brass and stand above the entrance to the cathedral; the other four are alive and stand in Lord Byron's stable.' Like other stud-owners the poet had more horses on his hands at one time than at another. Matthews speaks of four, Hoppner of three, and Byron himself of four, and also of as many as five and as few as two horses in his stable. The number given by Hoppner seems to have been the usual force of animals for the saddle, standing in the stable which the poet hired of the commandant on the Lido—one of the long narrow islands, lying between the Adriatic sea and the Lagune of Venice. After transporting his horses in January 1818, to this stable, where he kept them till he left Venice for good, Byron—if he was not too ill to leave home—visited the Lido daily for exercise on horseback, crossing the water from his palace on the Grand Canal in something less than three-quarters of an hour. more often than not in the company of a friend whom he had invited to ride with him. Tourists who would visit the spot where the poet was seen to the best advantage during

his long stay in the City of the Sea should take a gondola to the Lido, with its sand-beach towards the Adriatic, its sweep of market-gardens towards the Lagune, and the two forts (about three miles apart) between which he found a fair though by no means faultless riding-ground. It was on this sand-strip that Byron rode with Hobhouse and Shelley, gossiping with them about the latest news and newest books from England, and in default of a better comrade with Consul-General Hoppner, — a man of society and worldly shrewdness, who was nearly of the same age as the poet. Some of the pleasantest pages of Moore's 'Life' are those that relate to Byron's gallops on the Lido, whither the English tourists used to come, for the sake of seeing the poet alight from his boat and mount his horse. Had it not been for the exercise he took on this narrow island, and the fresh breezes that came from the Adriatic waves to his wan face, whether he scudded at his horse's fullest speed or lounged musingly in his saddle at foot-pace, Byron, stricken by the malaria of the canals, and enervated by debauchery, would probably have found his grave—where he meant it to be in case he died at Venice—under the sand of the Lido.

Though enough has been said for the description of the excesses, to be hinted at rather than calendared in these pages, something must be observed of the causes and effects of the vicious habits into which he fell in 1818. Moore would have us believe that, just as a naughty little boy leaps into a big puddle in mere defiance of the nurse who bids him walk on cleaner ground, Byron plunged into the abominations

of his Venetian depravity, to show his disdain of the English moralists who persisted in lecturing him for his evil behaviour, and bidding him mend his manners. After serious consideration few persons will think the biographer's suggestion worthy of the consideration bestowed upon it. It favours Moore's view that Byron laboured under a peculiar moral perversity, which made him often delight in slandering his own nature, and even incited him to fabricate evidence that he was a worse man than his enemies declared him. For the gratification of his 'morbid love of a bad reputation,' which Harness happily designated 'hypocrisy reversed,' Byron is said on good (though, by no means, the best) authority to have been in the practice of libelling himself in the Continental journals, in order that the libels on being reproduced in English newspapers should exasperate and deepen the abhorrence with which he was regarded by the rigid and censorious of his fellow-countrymen. It is scarcely credible that he was in *the habit* of doing so, though it is quite conceivable that he did so on a few rare occasions. The man, so perplexingly constituted as to delight in playing thus strangely on the credulity of his adversaries to their gratification and his own injury, must indeed have been enamoured of infamy and capable of going great lengths in speech and writing for the delectation of so singular a sense of humour. One would hesitate to assign any limit to his faculty of fibbing for so dismal an object,—to name any falsehood he would *not* have told in the pursuit of so eccentric an amusement. There is, however, a wide difference between 'bamming' credulous gossipmongers with monstrous *words* and 'bam-

ming' them with monstrous *deeds*. Trained in the dangerous school of humourists to which reference has been made in a previous chapter,—the school in which Byron was himself trained,—a man with a morbid taste for maligning himself might hoax foolish people with hideous avowals of guilt, or with anonymous libels on his character, and yet be quite incapable of committing the wicked acts so charged upon himself. He might even accuse himself of murder to shock people sufficiently simple to believe him, and yet be guiltless of the crime and have not the slightest propensity to commit it. At the instigation of perverse humour Byron might have been mad enough to do such a thing. Moore, however, would have his readers believe something far harder to believe ;—that, instead of charging himself with repulsive dissoluteness for the pleasure of laughing in his sleeve at the dupes of his trickery, he actually committed heinous immoralities, to put it beyond the doubt alike of his friends and his foes that he was a prodigious profligate. Had he been actuated in his Venetian excesses by the mere desire to shock social opinion, without having a genuine inclination for the excesses themselves, he could and would have achieved his purpose by the artifices of self slander, in which he was so expert. The unreasonableness of Moore's hypothesis appears also in the fact that much of the poet's Venetian immorality, consisting of matters not at all likely to be known in England, was not adapted to the end he is supposed to have had in view.

To account for the poet's depravation, that became deeper and more apparent as the weeks followed one another from the commencement of his residence in

Venice till the spring of 1819, readers must put aside Moore's suggestion, and think how social humiliation, renewal of disappointment, chagrin at the failure of his overtures for reconciliation with his wife, a growing sense of desolation and ignominy, and all the embittering consequences of his extrusion from English society would be likely to affect the temper and spirits, and through them the taste, of a man so proud and sensitive, so selfish and volatile, and so utterly devoid of stoical hardness. Though beneficial to his health and spirits, his residence in Switzerland was not calculated to improve his moral tone or raise him in his own respect. The libertine, who had amused himself with Claire whilst nursing hopes of reunion with his wife, can scarcely have crossed the Alps with an untroubled conscience. Some compunction for his treatment of the foolish girl (a gentlewoman by culture), whom he had discarded, must surely have mingled with his fierce resentment against the wife who had discarded him. It is conceivable that secret uneasiness, arising from his reflections on his recent relations with Claire, may have disposed him to take for his next mistress a woman with whom he should be able to part with a lighter heart. Though he had talked of his voyage from Dover to Ostend as a voyage to exile, he crossed the water with a hidden confidence of being back again in England in a few months ; but the subsequent rebuff from Lady Byron had shaken the confidence rudely, without altogether extinguishing it. With the Shelleys by his side in Switzerland, with Hobhouse for his companion in the Bernese Oberland and in Italy, the exile endured none of the pains and inconveniences of expatriation.



But after settling at Venice he tasted the bitterness of banishment. When the exhausting dissipations of the carnival, and the sharp attack of malarial fever had reduced him to a condition, in which so sensitive and companionable a being needed the stimulant of congenial and sympathetic society for the restoration of his nervous tone, he had for his closest, indeed his sole, familiar, the woman of alien race and tongue, of breeding and temper in no degree superior to her plebeian birth and station, whose lowering influence disposed him to prefer the rude comeliness and ruder badinage of sempstresses and courtesans to the finer beauty and humour of gentlewomen. As soon as it lost the charm of novelty, Venetian society ceased to amuse him. Petty and monotonous, it wanted the brilliance and diversity of Mayfair. Madame Albrizzi's receptions and Madame Benzoni's reunions afforded him none of the extravagant idolatry that had fed his vanity at Melbourne House and in Lady Jersey's drawing-rooms. Of the noble Venetians who stared at him, on being informed that he was an illustrious English noble, scarcely one in ten knew the names of his principal poems, scarcely one in a hundred had read fifty stanzas of 'Childe Harold.' With the men he never became popular; and for several weeks the complaisances of the women were more fruitful of embarrassment than of gratification to the poet who, from want of familiarity with their musical language, could not apprehend the subtleties of their pretty speeches. On becoming a master of their tongue, the man, who had lived with the brightest wits and ripest scholars of his native country, discovered the shallowness and amazing ignorance of the

pedants and pretenders who passed for men of learning at the assemblies of the two Italian countesses. Withdrawing disdainfully from the learned people, who needed his assurance that George Washington was not killed in a duel by Edmund Burke, Byron thought it better to chatter with Marianna Segati about her new clothes, than to converse gravely with Madame Albrizzi about her 'Portraits' of Famous Personages and her 'Essays' on the Works of Canova. Suffering from the want of congenial society, he longed for the voices of his friends in England. Feeling their absence acutely, he chafed and fretted at the fewness and brevity of their letters. 'Business,' he writes angrily to Murray (June 18, 1818), 'and the utter and inexplicable silence of all my correspondents renders me impatient and troublesome . . . . When I tell you that I have not heard a word from England since very early in May, I have made the eulogium of my friends, or the persons who call themselves so, since I have written so often and in the greatest anxiety. Thank God, the longer I am absent, the less cause I see for regretting the country or its living contents.'

A month later (July 17, 1818), he exclaims passionately to the same correspondent, in a postscript to one of the several sharp, scolding, insolent letters written by him in this period of his exile, 'I have written some very savage letters to Mr. Hobhouse, Kinnaird, to you, and to Hanson, because the silence of so long a time made me tear off my remaining rags of patience.' Yearning for his friends he had no longer the heart to go—or even to think of going to them. On January 28, 1817, he wrote to Moore, 'I think of

being in England in the spring ;' in March 1818, whilst declaring his intention of spending the remainder of his life in Venice, he meditated visiting England for the transaction of business ; but in June 1818, the thought of returning to the country of his birth had become so distasteful to him that he resented wrathfully the attempts that were being made to lure him back to London. 'Hobhouse's wish is, if possible,' he writes to Murray on June 18, 1818, 'to force me back to England ; he will not succeed ; and if he did, I would not stay. I hate the country and like this ; and all foolish opposition, of course, merely adds to the feeling.'

The misprints of his works published in London caused him to fret and fume at the carelessness of the correctors for the press. Calling Murray's attention to two slips that exposed him to adverse criticism at the time, and have perplexed many a reader of the 4th Canto of 'Childe Harold,' he wrote on 24th September, 1818, from Venice, " "And thou, who never yet of human wrong *left* the unbalanced scale, great Nemesis!" and not *lost*, which is nonsense, and what losing an unbalanced scale means, I know not ; but *leaving* an unbalanced scale, or a scale unbalanced, is intelligible. What does "Thy waters *wasted* them" mean (in the Canto)? *That is not me.* Consult the MS. *always.*'

The anguish of home-sickness, the plaintive cry of the exile, pining for the friends and scenes he dares not revisit, are audible in the poet's alternately petulant and passionate avowals of hatred of the land, whither he would have sped on quick wings, had it not been for the depressing and exasperating conviction that to show his face in London without his

wife's invitation would be to expose himself to a renewal of the ignominy of being silently cut. His vanity was to think himself a citizen of the world ; but no Englishman was more disqualified for the character. Whilst his memory, imagination, and sensibility prevented him from surviving the forces of youthful attachments, his peculiar vein of selfishness disposed him to brood angrily over the griefs of wounded pride and torn affections. So constituted it is not wonderful that he sunk into the mire of sensual grossness. Humiliation, shame, keen sense of injury, remorseful anger, and incessant fury of heart and brain were the forces that disposed Byron to depraving enjoyments, and after breaking down the safeguards of natural delicacy and artificial refinement drove him to deaden the tortures of indignation and despair with the dull pleasures of sordid dissipation.

Some of his excesses were notorious ; others were known only to persons who, like Fletcher and Hoppner, had exceptional opportunities for observing his downward course. His harem on the Grand Canal, to which he gathered frail women from the homes of artisans and the cabins of suburban peasants, was fruitful of scandals, that coming to the ears of English tourists from the gossip of gondoliers, were reported with wild exaggerations on the banks of the Thames. Little or nothing, however, was heard in England of the degree to which the poet now succumbed to the appetites of the glutton and the sot. Never so severely abstemious in drinking as in eating, and since the commencement of his domestic troubles notably less cautious with the bottle, Byron now for a short time became a large and habitual consumer of alcohol, pre-

ferring spirits to wine, possibly as the cheaper as well as the quicker instrument of intoxication ; for in the poet, who had been so free-handed and even wasteful of his pecuniary resources up to the time of his withdrawal from England, the desire of earning as much money as possible was soon associated with a propensity to the 'good old gentlemanly vice' of avarice. At the same time he ate whenever he was hungry,—often taking food to gratify a craving that was more due to dyspepsia than need of nutriment.

It is remarkable that this indulgence of the senses neither clouded nor weakened the intellect of the man, who had formerly been encouraged in abstinence by the mental clearness and activity which it afforded him. On the contrary, inconsiderate observers might have inferred from the development and fecundity of his genius throughout this period of moral declension that his mind was fortified and quickened by the excesses of his body. Charmed and delighted by the grace and exuberant energy of his friend's intellect at Geneva, Shelley was far more deeply impressed by its grandeur and subtlety two years later in Italy ; and had he returned to Venice, when Byron was at the lowest depth of his depravation, the younger poet would have had even stronger reasons for styling Count Maddalo 'a person of consummate genius' with 'powers incomparably greater than those of other men.' To account for this expansion of Byron's faculties under conditions that might have been expected to dwarf and blight them, readers must remember that he was precisely at the age when genius hastens to maturity ; that he had for years been gathering the wealth of thought and feeling, which

he now poured upon his readers with brilliant prodigality; and that by stimulating his combativeness the circumstances, under which he revealed his full mental magnitude, and spoke, now to the world's amazement and now to its delight, from the depths of his soul's anguish and daring, were conducive to intellectual energy in proportion as they were destructive of his happiness and hurtful to his nature. But though the excesses spared his mind, Byron suffered in his body a heavy punishment for fleshly sins. Drinking freely he paid the usual penalties of sottishness. In the increasing violence of his temper (ever too fervid), in the alteration of his voice (once so clear and musical that children turned from their play for the delight of listening to it), and in his penmanship (always indicative of irritability, and now growing so illegible that it troubled the best compositors to decipher it) there were signs of the nervous distress occasioned by drinking. At the same time eating freely (perhaps without taking more food than most men require for their sustenance) he became gross in form and visage,—reassuming in the course of a few months the unwieldy corpulence and facial obesity that had caused him so much inconvenience and disgust at Cambridge. In some respects the poet's Venetian fatness was more disfiguring than the grossness that afflicted him at manhood's threshold. At the university he may have been an inch or two larger round the waist, his cheeks may have been fuller and his jowl bigger, but they had the smoothness and firmness of youth, and a complexion no less clear than pale. At Venice, on the contrary, his flesh was pasty and flaccid, and the pallor of his counten-

ance had the faint yellow tinge and uncleanly hue of the sufferer from a sluggish liver. Working at night and far into the morning, when he had dismissed the sharers of his unedifying pleasures, the poet seldom went to rest till he was so fatigued that sleep came quickly to his pillow. But the slumber, wooed thus violently, seldom lasted for an hour before he returned to consciousness,—sometimes to roll in agony through long assaults of acute dyspepsia ; more often to lie in melancholy moodiness or endure the torture of afflicting hallucinations. Sufficiently severe to overcome the fortitude of the most stoical sufferer, to Byron, with a nervous idiosyncrasy that rendered him peculiarly sensitive and impatient of physical discomfort, the pain of these spasmodic seizures was almost maddening torment. The mental anguish that came to him from cruel dreams was no less acute. Even when he was so fortunate as to have several hours of unbroken and healthy sleep, he gained no sense of refreshment from the long repose, and left his couch to pass almost as many hours in despondency.

It was, perhaps, to his advantage that, when he had persisted for successive months in this hurtful way of living, the failure of his digestion compelled him to return to a sparing diet. Rebelling against the tyrant, who had shown so little consideration for its weakness and irritability, his stomach rejected the nutriment it could no longer assimilate. From the middle to the end of January 1819, his diet consisted chiefly of 'scampi,'—the most indigestible kind of fish taken in the Adriatic. In February, after losing his relish for this unwholesome species of marine food, he lived like hybernating animals and shipwrecked sea-

men on the tissues of his own body, losing in a few weeks much of the corpulence, which had been growing upon him through twice as many months, no less to his inconvenience than his disfigurement. For awhile he could drink grog without discomfort and even with gratification, when to eat a morsel of the tenderest meat or finest bread or a piece of biscuit was to provoke nausea, retching, and violent cramp of the body. Soon he suffered no less severely from a small glass of spirit-and-water than from a spoonful of macaroni. Taking probably the best course for its cure, this extreme sickness of the stomach 'clapt the muzzle on his jaws' (his own term) and made him abstemious, in spite of himself. That he continued to work with brain and pen, and produced some of his brightest letters and most strenuous verse during such illness, was not the least remarkable feature of his case. Contrasting strangely and alarmingly with the body's decay, the mind's restless vigour showed less like a sign of recuperative energy, than the action of a soul wilfully destroying its own frail tenement. For several days the invalid could neither take his customary exercise on the Lido, nor even descend to his gondola. Whilst his knees trembled beneath the diminished weight of his shrunken body, his singularly small and delicate hands grew bloodlessly wan and transparent, like the hands of a girl dying of consumption. His auburn tresses became visibly thinner, whilst the still abundant hair displayed a whitened thread in almost every curl. In his wakeful hours, when the mind was not occupied with its literary enterprises, anxiety was discernible in the resoluteness of his blue eyes, whilst his countenance wore the



peculiar look of apprehension and distress, that so often betrays a sick man's sense of growing danger.

After sinking to a condition, when the malaria of the canals or a whiff of poison from a foul drain might have sent him in a trice on his last voyage to the Lido, Byron surprised the few affectionate observers of his state with a recovery of power that disposed them to hopefulness. Getting the better of its irritability, the stomach no longer rejected the food which the invalid ventured to take at the suggestion of reviving appetite; and this change was the more reassuring as the desire for the small quantity of substantial nutriment was accompanied by no craving for ardent drink. Repose and wholesome diet having resulted in a renewal of physical vigour, the Hoppners observed with satisfaction that the patient showed no inclination to repeat the vicious extravagances that had been even more hurtful to his reputation than his health. Though he had persisted in the diversions of sordid licentiousness almost to the hour of his abject prostration, his illness had been preceded by indications of remorseful disgust at his own excesses. More than once, in a sudden revulsion of feeling, he had hastened abruptly from his noisy palace to the tranquil water, and escaping from the lewd riot of an infamous company had passed the remainder of the night in his gondola. Without venturing to play the part of Mentor to a man, so greatly his superior in rank and social eminence, and somewhat his superior in age, Hoppner had on several occasions shown his regret at the poet's way of living, and at least on one occasion had told him frankly that he was rendering himself ridiculous and con-

temptible to the Venetian coteries, less tolerant of *grossièreté* than of profligacy. It is not wonderful, therefore, that during his convalescence Byron forbore to gather about him the women who, probably in obedience to orders delivered to them by Fletcher, had ceased to visit the Palazzo for several weeks. Surprise may however have qualified the Consul-General's gratification, when on the restoration of his health Byron, instead of relapsing to his former associates and immoralities, displayed a wholesome preference for the 'cercles,' whose admiration for *the poet* had of late been associated with disdain for the *mauvais sujet*. In thus returning to the coteries, whose disfavour had been provoked by his sordid dissoluteness, it is conceivable that he was actuated by pique as well as prudence. Had Madame Benzoni's 'set' and Madame Albrizzi's friends regarded his depravation as an interesting example of the waywardness of genius, or spoken of its excesses with dismay and curiosity instead of ridicule and simple repulsion, the poet's morbid love of evil fame might have disposed him to return to the courses, that made him a fascinating enigma of naughtiness to perplexed and slightly horrified worshippers. On hearing from Hoppner that, instead of being puzzled or inordinately scandalised by his vicious irregularities, the Venetians attributed them contemptuously to a natural taste for low life and low living, it was consistent with his vanity and love of approbation to think it incumbent on his honour to convince the coteries that as a man of society no less than as a poet he had surrendered none of his titles to their homage.

Anyhow he returned to the circles, that had

seldom seen him during the previous twelve months, and was fast reinstating himself in the good graces of the amiable Venetians, when (April 6, 1819) he wrote to Murray, ‘ You ask about my health : about the beginning of the year I was in a state of great exhaustion, attended by such debility of stomach that nothing remained upon it ; and I was obliged to reform my “ way of life,” which was conducting me from the “ yellow leaf ” to the ground, with all deliberate speed. I am better in health and morals.’ Of the improvement of his health, sufficient evidence is afforded by his passion for Teresa Gamba Guiccioli, already in the first and sweetest of its tumultuous agitations. Of the improvement of his morals it is enough to say, that having survived his depraving *penchant* for the wives of Venetian tradesmen and mechanics, he was doing all in his power to make this Countess of sixteen years,—this bride of seven months’ standing—a faithless wife.

## CHAPTER III.

## TERESA GAMBA GUICCIOLI.

Byron's Regard for Teresa—Her Childhood and Beauty—Byron's First Introduction to her—Their Friendship at Venice—Teresa's Homeward Journey—'A Stranger loves the Lady of the Land'—Byron at Ravenna—Student of Medicine—Byron at Bologna—Mrs. Vavassour and Allegra—The Elopement (?)—Teresa at La Mira—Sensation in Venice—Count Guiccioli seeks Compensation—Teresa returns to her Husband—Byron's Preparations for returning to England—Invitation to Ravenna—The Poet 'At Home' in the Palazzo Guiccioli.

THE Marquise de Boissy having passed from the scene of her latest triumphs, the biographer may speak of her beauty, disposition, and mental endowments with a freedom that would violate the laws of gallantry and kindness, were she still alive. The same freedom may be exercised in respect to her relation to Byron, and the feelings he entertained for her during the last five years of his existence. More often her enemy, Death sometimes comes to the aid of Truth; and now that Death has removed the reasons for forbearance, it is well for Truth to record that the lady's amiability was most apparent in an imperfect submissiveness to the poet's caprices, that she was more indebted to education than natural alertness for her intellectual attainments, and that her personal attractions were by no means of the highest order. Truth also should put it on the

record of questions closed to further controversy, that, whilst Madame Guiccioli's relation to Byron was far from being so commendable as numerous writers have represented, there is no sufficient ground for thinking that Byron ever regarded her as more than an extremely eligible 'mistress,' or that he would at any point of their intercourse have made her his wife, had circumstances permitted him to do so.

Moore, indeed, would have his readers believe that the poet loved the Italian Countess, and with the single exception of Mary Chaworth never *really* loved any other woman in his whole life. But Moore, an unreliable guide on other matters, is a misleading informant on questions touching his friend's relations with women—and especially so on questions touching his relations with Teresa Guiccioli. Hoppner,—a far better authority than the Irishman on the affair under consideration (in truth the only one of the poet's English friends at all qualified to speak from his own knowledge positively on the nature of Byron's regard for the Contessa at the beginning of their liaison) wrote to the 'Athenæum' in May 1869, 'It was pretty evident to me that he at first cared little for her, however much his vanity may have been flattered on seeing the impression he had made on a young lady of rank in society so different from the other women he had known since his arrival in Venice; and it depended on the toss of a half-penny whether he would follow her to Ravenna or return to England.' Byron had no more intimate friend than Consul-General Hoppner in 1819. Writing to him freely from Ravenna and Bologna, he spoke to him no less freely at Venice respecting the Contessa

and his intercourse with the lady. Hoppner knew precisely how the liaison in its earlier stages affected his friend; and he had good reason for holding in 1819 the opinion he expressed in the 'Athenæum' half-a-century later. In his communications to the Consul-General on matters about which he was far too communicative even to so familiar an associate, the poet used language which puts it beyond question that even in the most romantic season of his attachment to the lady he regarded her only as a toy of the moment. And it seriously diminishes the confidence, which would otherwise have been due to the biographer's statements, that Moore was aware of the matters which demonstrate so clearly the nature of Byron's regard for the Countess. Moore is not to be blamed for omitting from his work facts that were unfit for general circulation; but he was guilty of something worse than disingenuousness in gushing about the fervour and sincerity of his friend's affection for Teresa, after giving consideration to circumstances he could not publish.

The daughter of a poor Romagnese noble of reduced fortunes, Teresa Gamba was born in the third year of the present century; her age (about which Moore errs by a year) being accurately given in the following words of the English note Byron wrote at Bologna (August 25, 1819) in her copy of 'Corinne.'—'My destiny rests with you, and you are a woman, seventeen years of age, and two out of a convent.' Brought from the convent into society when she had completed her fifteenth year, this girl of an ancient and impoverished house was offered in the usual way in the marriage-market of Ravenna

when, after hanging on her parents' hands for rather more than twelve months, she was bought by a man, old enough to be her grandfather, but still young enough to desire a third wife ;—the Count Guiccioli, a person of some culture, good estate and sordid nature, who had in his earlier time figured as a patron of the drama, and co-operated with Alfieri for the establishment of a National Theatre. On passing (*ætat.* sixteen) into the possession of a husband (*ætat.* sixty), whose revenue of some ten or twelve English thousands a-year made him one of the wealthiest nobles of Romagna, Teresa was fairly read in the poets of her own country, and had some knowledge of French literature,—attainments which may have commended her to the favour of her lord, in whom a generous concern for letters was united with a stronger respect for money. She was also fortunate in the personal endowments most likely to quicken the pulses of an aged breast. Too short (especially in the legs) for elegance, and too massive everywhere for grace, she possessed in the contour of her cheeks and lower jaw, in her large neck, fair shoulders, white bosom, and showy arms, the proportions and development of an almost matronly attractiveness. But if she was deficient in the girlish shapeliness, that appears so admirable to youthful beholders, Teresa, in the freshness of her clear and childish complexion, and the naïve cheeriness of a countenance alike prodigal of smiles and blushes, possessed the charms that are peculiarly delightful to veterans in pleasure. She had other attractions,—in her large blue eyes (*not* dark, as that perplexing Tom Medwin declares). veiled with singularly long brown lashes. ample white

eye-lids, high eye-brows (remarkable for their fine arches pencilled with umber), a dainty pair of lips, wickedly pretty teeth, a coy chin, and an almost too high forehead surmounted by the yellow hair, fine as cobweb and glossy as satin, that fell in a rich profusion of unconstrained curls to her shoulders. As Tom Medwin (the perplexing) insists that the lady's tresses were of 'the darkest auburn,' it is well for the writer of the present page to declare no less stoutly from his own personal knowledge and nice examination of the hair that the curls were yellow. Differing from Lady Caroline's fawn-flaxen hair in being of a deeper and unqualified yellow, Teresa Guiccioli's hair was so absolutely golden, that if a guinea-golden fillet of the deepest yellowness, ever seen in gold, had been put about her head, the tresses and the ornament would have been found of precisely the same hue and quality of colour. To her credit, also, be it said that, if her speech at times betrayed her Romagnese origin, her voice and way of using it were winningly gentle; and the prevailing air of her intelligent face was peculiarly expressive of simplicity, good humour and good breeding. In brief, with her happy face, delicate colour, cordial voice and amplitude of snowy developments, this broad-breasted, full-waisted, 'chumpy' girl-countess was precisely the creature of obvious flesh and blood to win the enthusiastic admiration of an elderly gentleman, requiring in his mistress a piquant combination of the freshness of 'sweet seventeen' with the plenitude of 'forty.' She was also precisely the being to win the approval of the English poet who, on escaping from Lady Caroline's persecutions, never regarded mere elegance



as a sufficient compensation for want of substance in the goddesses of human kind.

Three days after her marriage in the autumn of 1818, Teresa Guiccioli in all her bridal finery appeared at one of Madame Albrizzi's receptions, when Byron was present ; but the poet was not introduced to the young Countess till the April of the ensuing year, when they exchanged words for the first time at one of the Countess Benzoni's parties. With Byron, to see a creature so perfectly to his material taste in affairs of feminine loveliness was to evince the delight with which she inspired him ; to speak with her was in his case to resolve he would enslave her even as she had enslaved him. The will and the deed went hand in hand, when Byron entertained such a purpose. No less fleet than fierce, his 'passions' had taught him to strike whilst the passion was hot, so that the sentiment might at least survive the first opportunity for its triumph. In the present case there was especial need for alacrity, as the Countess and her husband (whom she never ventured to address by a more familiar title than 'Signor') were to leave Venice a fortnight hence. The necessity for speed did not however betray Byron into the haste that is speed's proverbial enemy. Instead of frightening the young bride with a premature avowal of his desire, or entertaining her with the commonplace flatteries which to a novice or blunderer in the gay art of libertinism would have appeared the best prelude to the revelation of his 'passion' on a later day, Byron, playing his old London game, spoke to her of her wholesome interests and 'simple matters of the house,'—of Ravenna and domestic pleasures, of

Dante's tomb and poetry, of her studies and the literature of her nation. Talking as though he felt or would fain feel for her as a brother, he led her to wish she were his sister. His voice (that had recovered the clearness and music which left it for awhile in the days of his not distant depravity) was gentle and tender. Without ceasing to be deferential it grew cooingly confidential. The Count (himself a lettered noble) may well have been gratified by the great poet's homage to his girlish wife,—by the attention with which he listened to her remarks on the famous writers of Italy. On the morrow the poet and Countess met as brother and sister. On several successive days they met on the same footing, each interview making them more communicative to and trustful in one another. From Teresa's lips the poet heard stories of the convent in which she had been educated, of the gaieties of the not too festive Ravenna which he promised to visit for the sake of drawing inspiration from Dante's tomb, and of the way in which she had been wooed and won by a husband so much her senior. From the poet's lips Teresa received the story of his wayward youth, sudden celebrity, and doleful separation from his darling Ada,—a story of many chapters that made the listener laugh at his comical adventures, exult in his triumphs, weep over his sorrows. Playing the part of her father-confessor in brotherly fashion, Byron questioned the plump little Countess about her knowledge of society, her tastes in music and literature, her liking for horse exercise, her domestic duties. The man was happy and confident; the girl unutterably happy and fearful. Platonic love passes quick to

warmer feeling in cold and cloudy England ;—quicker, far quicker in the warm and sunny South. Holding to their plans, the Count and Countess Guiccioli left Venice for Ravenna in the middle of April ; but before the husband and wife started for Ravenna, Byron and Teresa had ceased to be brother and sister. He had vowed to be faithful to her for ever : she had given him the strongest proof of her responsiveness to his passion.

Moore knew this was the course of his friend's and the Countess's mutual passion, and yet he speaks of her quickness in yielding to her suitor's entreaties, as though an Englishwoman would have resisted them only a few days longer. 'The young Italian,' says Moore, 'found herself suddenly inspired with a passion, of which, till that moment, her mind could not have formed the least idea :—she had thought of love but as an amusement, and now became its slave. If at the outset, too, less slow to be won than an Englishwoman, no sooner did she begin to understand the full despotism of the passion than her heart shrunk from it as something terrible, and she would have escaped, but the chain was already around her !' Less slow than an Englishwoman ! When and where did the Contessa give a sign of shrinking from the 'something terrible ?' In the eagerness of her acquiescence she was so heedless of the feminine proprieties as to omit the customary display of reluctance. Instead of struggling against the chain, she clutched and hugged it, in the pride and delight of novelty. On starting for Ravenna a faithless wife, this bride of seven months' standing, had not known Byron a full fortnight. When a lady flies to a suitor's arms with such

generous promptitude, it is unhandsome to speak of her alacrity as comparable with northern slowness 'at the outset.'

Parting from her lover in grief, the Countess was so overpowered by her feelings as to lose her consciousness thrice, during the first day's journey. At each of her several resting-places between Venice and Ravenna she wrote to Byron, entreating him to follow her quickly, declaring that without him she should go speedily to her grave, promising him all the love, honour, and obedience she had so recently promised her husband. To make herself less unworthy of his regard, to make herself a better woman, she would observe all his orders for the amendment of her ways, the improvement of her nature, the exaltation of her spirit. 'In accordance with his advice she would avoid all general society, and devote herself to reading, music, domestic cares, riding on horseback.' To please him should henceforth be her first object and chief delight. She did not reach Ravenna without illness, more serious than fainting-fits, induced by passionate yearning for her lover. On arriving at the Palazzo Guiccioli in her native city she was in the condition, styled 'half-dead' by romantic biographers and novelists, given to write rhapsodical nonsense. There is no evidence that she did *not* really faint away and lie up from dangerous illness on the road, and come to her Ravennese palace in semi-deadness. No injustice, however, is done the lady by a suggestion that the fainting-fits, and dangerous illness and semi-deadness may have been mere semblances of nervous trouble for her husband's needful discipline,—or may even have resembled the standing armies of the third

French Empire in being less affairs of reality than of paper. The women of England are of course incapable of such artifice; but this Italian Countess was capable of writing, for her lover's edification, more vehemently of her piteous case than her actual experiences would warrant. The consumption, which seized her so opportunely in May and left her so conveniently in July, and harassed her worse than ever in September, was certainly more a thing of trick than truth. To induce the Count to welcome Byron to Ravenna, the Countess took to coughing and spitting blood. To cover her flight to Venice in Byron's company she contrived a pulmonary relapse, that required the treatment to be found only in so salubrious a city. The lady, who showed so singular an aptitude for shamming half-deadness and consumption was ready to simulate death itself for a purpose. To be his companion for ever without incurring the infamy of elopement, she actually proposed to Byron that she should feign to be dead, and by means of a mock-sepulture pass to his possession through the grim gateway of an avoidable grave.

On receiving Teresa's account of the deplorable condition in which she arrived at Ravenna, together with her assurances that his presence could alone restore her to health and happiness, Byron made arrangements for visiting her in fulfilment of the promise given her at Venice. On the 15th of May he was thinking of starting for Romagna in the following week. Circumstances, however, caused him to postpone the expedition till the 2nd of June, on which day he left his villa at La Mira and journeyed (*via* Padua, Ferrara, and Bologna) towards the lady of

his love,' who had informed him that her relatives and friends were looking for his arrival amongst them. 'A journey in an Italian June,' he wrote to Hoppner from Padua, 'is a conscription; and if I was not the most constant of men, I should now be swimming from the Lido, instead of smoking in the dust of Padua.' On one of the banks of the Po, this most constant of men wrote the familiar verses so exquisitely eloquent of desire.

'River, that rollest by the ancient walls,  
Where dwells the lady of my love, when she  
Walks by thy brink, and there perchance recalls  
A faint and fleeting memory of me :

'What if thy deep and ample stream should be  
A mirror of my heart, where she may read  
The thousand thoughts I now betray to thee  
Wild as thy waves, and headlong as thy speed !

'What do I say ?—a mirror of my heart ?  
Are not thy waters sweeping, dark and strong ?  
Such as my feelings were and are, thou art ;  
And such as thou art were my passions long.

'Time may have somewhat tamed them,—not for ever ;  
Thou overflow'st thy banks, and not for aye  
Thy bosom overboils, congenial river !  
Thy floods subside, and mine have sunk away,

'But left long wrecks behind, and now again,  
Borne in our old unchang'd career, we move ;  
Thou tendest wildly onwards to the main,  
And I—to loving *one* I should not love.

'The current I behold will sweep beneath  
Her native walls and murmur at her feet ;  
Her eyes will look on thee, when she shall breathe  
The twilight air, unharm'd by summer's heat.

‘She will look on thee—I have look’d on thee,  
Full of that thought ; and from that moment, ne’er  
Thy waters could I dream of, name, or see,  
Without the inseparable sigh for her !

‘Her bright eyes will be imaged in thy stream,—  
Yes ! they will meet the wave I gaze on now ;  
Mine cannot witness, even in a dream,  
That happy wave repass me in its flow !

‘The wave that bears my tears returns no more :  
Will she return by whom that wave shall sweep ?—  
Both tread thy banks, both wander on thy shore,  
I by thy source, she by the dark-blue deep.

‘But that which keepeth us apart is not  
Distance, nor depth of wave, nor space of earth,  
But the distraction of a various lot,  
As various as the climates of our birth.

‘A stranger loves the lady of the land,  
Born far beyond the mountains, but his blood  
Is all meridian, as if never fann’d  
By the black wind that chills the polar flood.

‘My blood is all meridian ; were it not,  
I had not left my clime, nor should I be,  
In spite of tortures, ne’er to be forgot,  
A slave again of love,—at least of thee.

‘’Tis vain to struggle—let me perish young—  
Live as I lived, and love as I have loved ;  
To dust if I return, from dust I sprung,  
And then, at least, my heart can ne’er be moved.’

On reaching Bologna where he hoped to find a letter from Teresa, giving him precise instructions for the regulation of his movements, he was sorely disappointed by the non-appearance of the looked-for epistle. The Countess’s illness (which changes in the course of twelve pages of Moore’s text from consump-

tion to intermittent fever) certainly was no cause of her silence, which was wholly due to the inopportune absence of the confidential person, who had hitherto been the channel of her clandestine correspondence with the poet. In his chagrin at a circumstance, which may well have caused him perplexity and annoyance, Byron, after lingering two days at Bologna, had made up his mind to return at once to Venice, when suddenly relinquishing a purpose that would have exposed him to the ridicule of the Venetian coteries, he went on to Ravenna on the 8th of the month.—arriving there openly in the character of a famous poet, brought to the dull town by poetic interest in Dante. The stir and gossip of the tranquil little city, at the arrival of so celebrated a person, can be imagined. Byron, who found the people full of concern for the alarming illness of their young Countess, had scarcely settled himself in his hotel, when he received a visit of ceremony and friendship from the Count Guiccioli, who entreated him to come on the following day to the bedside of the dying lady. Of course the invitation was accepted with proper expressions of the poet's astonishment and profound sorrow at the mournful intelligence, and also of the delight he had anticipated from a renewal of his intercourse with the Countess's husband. Byron's first visit to the dying Teresa in her own house having the desired effect on the patient, it was repeated daily, with the Count's approval.

For two months (from June 10 to August 9) the Palazzo Guiccioli was the scene of a curious comedy of several acts and many exquisitely humorous scenes; the three actors of the droll



drama being—the young Countess so near dying of consumption, intermittent fever *and* love: the poet acting as her physician; and the elderly Count, less jealous than covetous, who instead of being moved by munificent impulses towards the physician, may be suspected of even then nursing a purpose of extorting a heavy fee from the successful doctor. Byron's published letters to Hoppner contain passages which, taken by themselves, exhibit him as the dupe of the lady's acting, but there is no lack of evidence that he was from the first fully alive to the nature of her malady and the best way of treating it. 'I greatly fear that the Guiccioli,' Byron wrote from Ravenna (July 2, 1819) to his friend at Venice, 'is going into a consumption, to which her constitution tends. Thus it is with everything and everybody for whom I feel anything like a real attachment:—“War, death, or discord, doth lay siege to them!” I never even could keep alive a dog that I liked or that liked me.' The sadness these mournful assurances occasioned the Consul-General was quickly mitigated by the reflection that the patient had the best physician for her case in close attendance upon her.

When Count Guiccioli shared their long interviews, the Countess languished into suffering and silence, and Byron spoke with bated breath, whilst his countenance wore the look of affectionate solemnity, befitting a chamber that might soon become the sanctuary of death. But the lady's spirits rallied, and Byron prattled away to her right merrily, as soon as the Count withdrew. To qualify him to act as her medical adviser, Byron applied himself to the study of medicine, and then, with modesty unusual in a novice

of a difficult art, the amateur doctor wrote to Professor Aglietti for his opinion on the Countess's illness, and entreated the famous physician to hasten to him from Venice, even though he could only remain at Ravenna for twenty-four hours. 'For a long time,' Teresa Guiccioli wrote to Moore, 'he had perpetually medical books in his hands; and not trusting my physicians, he obtained permission from Count Guiccioli, to send for a very clever physician, a friend of his, in whom he placed great confidence.' Of course Aglietti took Byron's view of the case, and declared the poet was treating it in the very best way.

The Count's complaisance puzzled the poet, who wrote to Murray on June 29, 1819, 'Her husband is a very polite personage, but I wish he would not carry me out in his coach and six, like Whittington and his cat.' Nine days earlier the poet had written to Hoppner, '*She* manages very well—but if I come away with a stiletto in my gizzard some fine afternoon, I shall not be astonished. I can't make *him* out at all—he visits me frequently, and takes me out (like Whittington, the Lord Mayor) in a coach and six horses. The fact appears to be, that he is completely *governed* by her—for that matter, so am I. The people here don't know what to make of us, as he had the character of jealousy with all his wives—this is the third.' Teresa was playing her game with cleverness highly creditable to her years; but her success was possibly due less to her cleverness than to her husband's crafty complicity in her proceedings. The probable explanation of this Italian nobleman's behaviour is that he winked at his bride's liaison with the English lord, because it offered him a brief respite

from the humiliation of being compelled to allow his wife a permanent cavalier in attendance, and because he saw his way to making money out of the affair. Like Byron the Count loved money, and whilst capable of liberality and even profuseness in the expenses of ostentation, was vigilant against the inflammation of his weekly bills. Byron's notorious fickleness in gallantry rendered it improbable that he would wish to dangle at the Countess's skirt for many months. Under these circumstances the Count had good and substantial motives for conniving at a temporary and secret arrangement, which would postpone the demand for a permanent and open one. Anyhow the Count Guiccioli had no thought of thrusting a dagger between the ribs of his wife's admirer. Byron knew the Count better after knowing him four months longer.

On the approach of August 9, 1819,—the day appointed for the Count and Countess (the lady having by this time regained her usual good health) to migrate from their palace at Ravenna to their residence in Bologna,—Byron's apprehension of a grievously long severance from his mistress caused him to implore the lady to fly with him to some scene of perpetual happiness. Probably he was no more sincere in this entreaty, than he had been years since when in the postscript of the letter, which reiterated his refusal of the lady's prayer for immediate elopement, he declared his readiness to fly with Lady Caroline Lamb whithersoever and whenever she pleased. After living nearly three years in Italy he must have been aware, that though quicker than her sisters of the cold north to acquiesce in anything short of elope-

ment for a lover's happiness, the Italian gentlewoman shrinks from the bare thought of scandalous *flight* from her husband even as an English gentlewoman shrinks from the bare imagination of the wickedness which in every land usually precedes the act of desertion. Had he thought Teresa would have taken him at his word, the poet would perhaps have been less ready with his generous offer to cover her with infamy. It is enough that he made the offer, which plunging her into agitations of shame and terror, drew from her a passionate avowal that, though willing to gratify him in every other way, she could not take the step that clothing her with perpetual ignominy would place her, Countess though she was, in the herd of fallen women. On growing calmer, she made the strange offer already referred to. If the career of the Countess Guiccioli could be closed with honour, she would consent to any proposal, do anything he desired for his happiness. The woman, who had feigned consumption and half-death, was ready to feign death itself and be committed in shroud and coffin to the terrors of the charnel-house, in order to escape from the evidence of her identity with her husband's wife, and be able to devote herself wholly to her lover, without dishonouring the Guicciolis and the Gambas. As it was calculated to please his fancy and gratify his appetite for mysterious adventure and the terrors of romance, this project would have received more of his serious consideration, had Byron been desirous of taking the Countess on his hands for ever.

The Count's complaisance deferred for another ten days or so the event that might have been the

occasion for so melodramatic a performance. It was arranged that Byron should follow to Bologna the dear mistress 'who had fed his heart upon smiles and wine for the last two months.' On the day after the Count and Countess re-entered their house at Bologna, Byron settled himself in the city's best inn. On the 21st of the month, when the Count and his bride went on a brief trip to some of their Romagnese properties, the poet was in truth (notwithstanding all that writers of romance allege to the contrary) by no means sorry to be relieved for a brief while of the society of the lady, whose demands on his chivalric consideration had not tended to strengthen him during the earlier weeks of his sojourn at Ravenna; the lady to whom he had addressed the dedicatory verses—chaste though cold as ice, exquisitely pure and elegant though absolutely artificial—of 'The Prophecy of Dante:'—

'Lady! if for the cold and cloudy clime  
 Where I was born, but where I would not die,  
 Of the great Poet-sire of Italy  
 I dare to build the imitative rhyme,  
 Harsh Runic copy of the South's sublime,  
 THOU art the cause; and howsoever I  
 Fall short of his immortal harmony,  
 Thy gentle heart will pardon me the crime.  
 Thou, in the pride of Beauty and of Youth,  
 Spakest; and for thee to speak and be obey'd  
 Are one; but only in the sunny South  
 Such sounds are utter'd, and such charms display'd,  
 So sweet a language from so fair a mouth—  
 Ah! to what effort would it not persuade?'

The ten days, which he passed at Bologna in the society of the Guicciolis, had been days of nervous

irritability and tempestuous agitation to Byron. There is abundant evidence in his letters that he was by turns hysterical, perverse, and passionate,—conditions of feeling for which his relations with Teresa and her husband were chiefly accountable, though other matters worried him. Chafing and fuming at the adverse criticisms on the two first cantos of ‘Don Juan,’ he returned to his old practice of brooding over his domestic troubles. On the twelfth evening of August he was sitting in the same box with the Countess Guiccioli, when he experienced during the performance of Alfieri’s ‘Myrrha,’ just such an hysterical seizure as he had experienced four years since on seeing Kean’s impersonation of ‘Sir Giles Overreach ;’—an outbreak of emotion that was the more inconvenient, because it threw the young Countess into hysterics of another kind. On the morrow of this equally significant and vexatious exhibition of sensibility, Byron was writing in the old strain of morbid violence about Time the Avenger and the signal punishment meted out by stern justice to the atrocious Romilly. On the 22nd of the same month, in his exasperation at an attack on ‘Don Juan’ he is dashing off in hot haste and fury (‘amidst a thousand vexations’) the Wortley-Clutterbuck epistle of retaliation, which Murray had the good sense to withhold from publication, after printing it in pamphlet form. On the 24th inst. (three days after Teresa’s departure with her husband) he writes to Murray, ‘I wish I had been in better spirits ; but I am out of sorts, out of nerves, and now and then (I begin to fear) out of my senses. All this Italy has done for me, and not England. I defy

all you, and your climate to boot, to make me mad. But if ever I do really become a bedlamite, and wear a strait waistcoat, let me be brought back among you; your people will then be proper company.' Three days later (the 27th inst.) he has a violent quarrel with a lieutenant in the Papal troops, who has sold him an unsound horse,—a quarrel in which after railing at the offender with unmannerly and even maniacal violence he challenges him to fight then and there with pistol or sword under circumstances, which remind the reader of the ugly Byron-Chaworth duel. Two days later (the 29th instant) he preludes his blustering account to Murray of this rowdy business with this noteworthy avowal. 'I have been in a rage these two days, and am still bilious therefrom.'

He was raging in this frantic style, now throwing pen-and-ink daggers at his enemies in England, and now flying like a mad bull-dog at enemies crossing his path in Bologna, during the very period in which he is declared by Moore to have surrendered himself to softening and subduing melancholy. The biographer assures us that it was the poet's fancy, during Madame Guiccioli's absence from Bologna, to go daily to her house at his usual hour of visiting her, and there, causing her apartments to be opened, to sit turning over her books, and writing in them. 'And here,' says the poetical describer of his friend's way of passing the days at Bologna during his mistress's tour about the country, 'with a heart softened and excited by the new feeling that had taken possession of him, he appears to have given himself up, during the interval of solitude, to a train

of melancholy and impassioned thought, such as, for a time, brought back all the romance of his youthful days. That spring of natural tenderness within his soul, which neither the world's efforts nor his own had been able to chill or choke up, was now, with something of its first freshness, set flowing once more. He again knew what it was to love and be loved,—too late, it is true, for happiness, and too wrongly for peace, but with devotion enough, on the part of the woman, to satisfy even his thirst for affection, and with a sad earnestness, on his own, a foreboding fidelity, which made him cling but the more passionately to this attachment from feeling that it would be his last.' After turning over the books of the absent lady's apartments, the poet is described as descending to her garden, and passing hours in musing there. 'It was on an occasion of this kind, as he stood looking, in a state of unconscious reverie, into one of those fountains so common in the gardens of Italy, that there came suddenly into his mind such desolate fancies, such bodings of the misery he might bring on her he loved, by that doom which (as he has himself written) 'makes it fatal to be loved,' that, overwhelmed with his own thoughts, he burst into an agony of tears;'—a flow of overwhelming emotion, so perfectly in accordance with all that is known of the poet's sensibility and hysterical diathesis, that one can readily accept to the very letter his account of the incident.

Whilst there is no evidence that Byron went *daily* in this manner to Teresa's deserted rooms, there is much evidence to discredit the allegation. It is highly improbable that he spent hours at a time in



this fashion on the days when he was throwing from angry pen the Wortley-Clutterbuck epistle (that made twenty-three pages of printed matter); when he was writing the alternately querulous and stormy letters to Murray; when he was in the fierceness of his wild fury against the military horse-sharper whom he challenged ('thief' though the fellow was) to fight a murderous duel. The truth is that he visited the silent chambers and garden of the fair Guiccioli—once and again; certainly twice; possibly oftener. Now, no less than in former times of emotional riot, his moods followed one another quickly. Passing in an hour from rage to love, he reverted in a trice from tenderness to wrath. In the gentler of his melancholy moods it pleased him to visit the fair garden of the Guiccioli, where he prattled with the gardeners and their women, and to saunter in the Campo Santo, where he made friends with the sexton and his pretty daughter. He certainly visited the Countess's room of study on the 23rd of August (the day *between* the subsidence of the Wortley-Clutterbuck fury and the wrath of the 'bedlamite letter' to Murray) when he penned the brief note, touching Madame de Stäel on a leaf of Teresa's 'Fragmens des Pensées de Corinne.' He certainly went there again on the 25th of August (the earlier of the two days *between* the working-off of the 'bedlamite outbreak' and his wild row with the military horse-dealer), when he wrote on the last page of the 'Corinne' this remarkable epistle:

'MY DEAREST TERESA.—I have read this book in your garden;—my love, you were absent, or else

I could not have read it. It is a favourite book of yours, and the writer was a favourite friend of mine. You will not understand these English words, and others will not understand them—which is the reason I have not scrawled them in Italian. But you will recognise the hand-writing of him who passionately loved you, and you will divine that, over a book which was yours, he could only think of love. In that word, beautiful in all languages, but most so in yours—*Amor mio*—is comprised my existence here and hereafter. I feel I exist here, and I fear I shall exist hereafter,—to *what* purpose you will decide; my destiny rests with you, and you are a woman, seventeen years of age, and two out of a convent. I wish you had stayed there, with all my heart—or, at least, that I had never met you in your married estate. But all this is too late, I love you, and you love me,—at least, you *say so*, and *act* as if you *did* so, which last is a great consolation in all events. But *I* more than love you, and cannot cease to love you.—Think of me, sometimes, when the Alps and the ocean divide us,—but they never will, unless you *wish* it.—BYRON.'

Characteristic of the man, in its tenderness of expression, its dubitancy of feeling, its mistrust of his Teresa's affectionate assurances, this singular epistle—written in a tongue unknown to the lady—is a revelation of the wavering resoluteness and nervous incertitude of his purpose respecting the girl, who had inspired him with a passion far removed from love,—a passion less pure (for had he not worshipped Marianna Segati and Margarita Cogni?)

but no less violent than his affection for Jane Clermont,—a passion of whose grossness he made a shameless revelation to Hoppner. Hovering over a project, that offered him the pleasures sweetest to his senses, together with a triumph peculiarly fascinating to his vanity, the exile hesitated to commit himself to a course, that might postpone for years, possibly for ever, his return to the land for a sight of whose white cliffs he had long been pining. Hence the selection of the language in which he couched the proposal he could not deny himself the delight of framing. Too weak to resist stoutly, and too prudent to yield unreluctantly, he dallied with the tempter he dared not fight. Whilst thus nursing the design to purchase immediate gratification with future embarrassment, he looked with less of apprehension than of hope to the contingencies that, preserving him from its accomplishment, would place the Alps and the ocean between him and the object of his desire. The last words of the epistle are especially noteworthy for their indication of a resolve to return to England, should he be so fortunate as to encounter disappointment in Italy.—No wonder that, with irritating letters coming to him by every post from England, the man of fervid temper and quick sensibility, was unusually hysterical during his brief stay in the city where he eventually took the fatal step, for which weakness of will was even more accountable than power of passion.

At the time of starting for Romagna, Byron was entertaining a proposal, that might have preserved Allegra from death in childhood. An English lady, Mrs. Vavassour—a friend of the Hoppners, who de-

lighted in children, without having a child of her own breast, on which to expend her strong maternal affectionateness,—had offered to adopt Jane Clermont's daughter, provided Byron would surrender all his paternal authority over the little girl, together with the claim to be even consulted respecting her education ; and notwithstanding his promise to Claire before the birth of her offspring, the poet would have consented to Mrs. Vavassour's offer, had not she persisted in her demand for the total transference of his parental powers. Negotiation on this matter was still in progress between the lady and the Consul-General, when Mrs. Hoppner soon after Byron's arrival at Ravenna wished to be relieved of the child's custody, at least for a time, in order that she might be free to accompany her husband on a trip to Switzerland. 'The best way,' Byron wrote from Ravenna to Hoppner on July 2, 1819, 'will be to leave Allegra with Antonio's spouse till I can decide something about her and myself—but I thought that you would have had an answer from Mrs. Vavassour. You have had bore enough with me and mine already.' The scheme having fallen through, in consequence of Mrs. Vavassour's refusal to abate anything of her demand for complete parental authority, Byron directed that the child and her nurse should join him at Bologna. 'I have,' he wrote to Murray on August 24, 1819, 'sent for my daughter from Venice.' It has been assumed that Byron sent for his child at this moment, merely for the diversion of her infantile presence and prattle. But whilst it is probable, it is also pleasant to believe, that before taking the meditated step which would place the Countess Guiccioli, at least, for a while, in

the position of step-mother to the little girl, he wished to form an opinion from an observation of the lady's treatment of the child, whether Allegra would be likely to find a fond and devoted mother in Teresa. Anyhow, the child and her nurse were with Byron when the Guicciolis returned from their tour to Bologna.

Teresa's reappearance at Bologna was followed at no long interval by her husband's departure for Ravenna, whither he had been called by business ; and during his absence, she went from Bologna to Venice in Byron's company. Of course the lady went thither to consult physicians about her health, which fluctuated in so singular a manner. Of course her journey to so salubrious a capital in her lover's society was no shameless flight ; but a progress made with due regard to her dignity and honour. Is it not written in Moore's 'Life,' in the lady's own words, that the state of her health obliged her to go to Venice, and that she went thither so attended, with her husband's consent ? On this point the lady is the only and by no means satisfactory witness. Had she been any other nobleman's wife, common sense would reject her statement as an impudent untruth ; but as she was the wife of the Count Guiccioli, who had been conniving for weeks and months at her passion for the poet, it is conceivable that she had received her husband's permission to please herself when she started from Bologna on the 15th of September under circumstances so scandalous. At Bologna the Countess's departure with the English lord was regarded as an elopement ; and all the notorious circumstances of the affair, together with a far larger

number of imaginary particulars, speedily became the gossip of every palace and tavern of the city and surrounding country. 'When we arrived at Bologna,' Lady Morgan wrote from Florence, October 25, 1819, to Lady Clark, 'they recommended us our apartments by telling us they were well aired, as Lord Byron only left them the day before. You may suppose he came to Bologna to visit the learned body of that ancient university, or consult its famous library. Not a bit of it. He came to carry off a young lady.'

The invalid was, of course, too weak for rapid travel. Journeying leisurely she and Byron 'visited the Euganean Hills and Arquà, and wrote their names in the book which is presented to those who make this pilgrimage. But,' adds the Countess in her narrative of the proceedings, that placed her in the world's regard as Byron's mistress, 'I cannot linger over these recollections of happiness.' The invalid was a very happy invalid. On her arrival at Venice it was discovered by her physicians that she needed country air; the immediate consequence of the discovery being that Byron carried her off to his villa at La Mira, and introduced her to the same garden under whose trees he had sate with Marianna Segati, the same rooms in which Marianna had dwelt, the same bed in which the linendraper's wife had slept. It does not seem to have occurred to the romantic believers in the chivalric purity of his devotion to Teresa Guiccioli, that they were speaking even worse of Byron than he was spoken of by his enemies, in declaring him capable of treating the object of his finest affection with such indignity. Association with Margarita Cogni and her crew had impregnated

his nature with poisonous uncleanness, not to be speedily eliminated from his soul,—the poison that manifested itself in the disfigurements of ‘Don Juan,’ and rendered him capable of satirising his wife with satanic malice and absolutely appalling vulgarity. But it had not so far debased him, that he could have housed this seventeen-years young Italian Countess at La Mira of all places in the world, had she been (as Moore puts it) ‘the only *real* love of his whole life, with one signal exception,’ or in fact anything more in his eyes than a highly eligible mistress.

Having brought her to La Mira, the poet lived there with her. ‘Lord Byron,’ says the Countess in her letter to Moore, ‘having a villa at La Mira, gave it up to me, and came to reside there with me.’ What a way of ‘giving up’ a country-house to a lady’s use! The lady does not venture to assert, that in residing thus openly under her paramour’s roof, she acted with her husband’s sanction. Had she made the assertion one would be slow to declare it incredible. If the Count did not authorize the step, by which his young wife crossed the clear line that in Italy divided women of honour from women of abandonment, he condoned the offence in so remarkable a manner, that he may be imagined capable of any extravagance of turpitude. She had been at La Mira for about a fortnight, living there notoriously, to the hot scandal of the ladies of Venice, who with all their tolerance of moral laxity retained their respect for certain rules of conventional decorum, and resented the violation of those rules with a warmth natural in persons, capable of nearly every other kind of immorality, when she received a letter from her absent lord. A letter of

scornful repudiation? of indignant expostulation? of stern command? No such thing! All the writer of the wheedling note required of her was that she should induce Lord Byron to *lend* her husband 1000*l.*! This was the game of this wealthy and long-descended noble! Instead of thirsting for the blood of his wife's betrayer, he only hungered for a little of his money!—of course, on loan, at five per cent! 'Restoration or thousand pounds!' was the demand of this Italian Count who in his earlier time had earned a reputation for being a jealous husband; and instead of making the demand directly and without subterfuge, he wished to use his wife as an instrument for screwing the money, by way of a loan, out of her paramour. If Byron had misconceived the spirit of Teresa's husband, Count Guiccioli had been no less mistaken in his estimate of the disposition of her lover. No man was more averse than the poet of 1819 to parting with so large a sum as 1000*l.* on insufficient grounds. Though Moore and Mr. Alexander Scott urged their friend to pay the 1000*l.* without demur or any show of unwillingness, and to make the payment an occasion for returning the lady to her lawful owner, the poet (who had no intention in October 1819 that his liaison with the Contessa should be a long affair) declined to act on their counsel, and declared with a knowing nod of the head that he would 'save the lady and the money too.'

The Countess had been some days at La Mira, when Moore, coming to the villa in the afternoon of the 8th of October (for the brief sojourn at Venice that was the biographer's only occasion of personal intercourse with his friend, after his withdrawal from



England) was surprised by the change in the poet's countenance that, having lost much of its earlier refinement by the enlargement of the features, was not improved by the whiskers, which he had recently adopted, to escape the imputation of having the '*faccia di musico!*' 'He had,' says Moore, 'grown fatter both in person and face, and the latter had suffered most by the change.' Though the visit was over in a few days, Moore remained at Venice long enough to discover how greatly Byron had shocked Venetian sentiment by withdrawing his '*Amica*' from her husband's protection, and living with her under the same roof. Whilst Madame Benzoni's friends expressed themselves freely on this painful subject in the hearing of the Irish poet, the lady herself ventured to entreat him to use his influence with his friend, for the abatement of so extraordinary a scandal. 'You must really scold your friend,' said the lady,—adding with more complaisance than sincerity, 'Till this unfortunate affair he behaved himself *so well!*' Moore's stay at Venice closed with the dinner at the La Mira villa, immediately before which repast he received from Byron's own hands the manuscript of '*The Memoirs*,' respecting whose destruction something will be said in an ensuing chapter. On giving his friend the present, that in the course of a few years became the subject of so much angry discussion, Byron remarked, 'It is not a thing that can be published during my lifetime, but you can have it, if you like. There, do whatever you please with it.'

Byron's natural reluctance to part with 1000*l.* caused the Count Guiccioli to think it full time for Teresa to return to his protection. At the same time

Venetian 'society' was evincing its disapproval of Teresa's behaviour in ways that made Byron feel it would be well for him to return her to the Count on the earliest occasion. Fuming with rage at the slights and censorious expostulations by which the ladies of Venice manifested their displeasure at her misbehaviour, Byron saw he had better escape from a position of extreme discredit and numerous embarrassments. Aware at Bologna that the enterprise, which occasioned him so much agitation, might have disastrous consequences, he at the same time cherished the hope of being able to extricate himself at an early date from the difficulties that would result from the escapade. In less than a month it was obvious to him that he could not withdraw too soon from an entanglement that was already giving him more annoyance than pleasure. All that he ventured to object to the advice given him by Moore and Alexander Scott in the second week of October was that he could not consent to pay so heavily for his frolic.

In the first week of the ensuing month (November), when the Count Guiccioli appeared in Venice to reclaim his erring wife, it is conceivable that he was disappointed by the poet's readiness to acquiesce in his wishes on every point, with the exception of the pecuniary question. Receiving Teresa's husband (the Count) precisely as he had a year earlier received Margarita Coggi's husband (the baker), Byron said, 'You wish for Madame ; then by all means take her.' Coming to Venice with a paper of conditions for his wife's acceptance in his pocket (the principal condition being that she should desist from intercourse

of every kind with her lover ; the minor conditions having reference to comparatively trivial matters that set Byron laughing), the Count had stormy interviews and hard battles with Teresa, who would have risen against her owner in unqualified mutiny and sent him back to Ravenna with a flea in his ear, had her lover encouraged her rebellious spirit with so much as a single approving nod or a single sympathetic glance. Byron's tameness at her moment of trial would have been more painful to Teresa, and might even have inspired her with feelings of resentment, had he not been suffering from the prostration of a sharp attack of tertian fever :—yet another assault by the enemy that eventually killed him. With encouragement from her lover, who indeed advised her to be a sensible creature and go home, Teresa made a feeble resistance. Accepting the conditions, after much weeping and appropriate indulgence in hysterics, she kissed the poet, and returned to Ravenna with her husband,—of course, not without a hope that, by sending intelligence of her imminent death from despair and consumption, she would again draw her lover to her bedside in the Palazzo Guiccioli. So far, the game had been a winning one with Byron, who, after gaining from it a series of exciting adventures and much romantic enjoyment in Ravenna, Bologna, and Venice, was now quit of his playmate in the drama, without having paid her husband a single farthing for her services. He had saved the thousand pounds, returned the lady to her conjugal partner, and won the wager with which Alexander Scott had supported his strong opinion that the poet would not induce the Count

to take back his young wife without *lending* the money.

A fortnight later events favoured the hope, with which Teresa retraced her steps to Ravenna. Worried by the misdemeanour of the Secretary (House Steward), whose petty peculations had tended to the inflammation of his master's weekly bills, and labouring under the dejection that attends malarial fever, Byron soon missed the Contessa, who in the sharper and more violent stages of the malady had nursed him as tenderly as he had been nursed under similar circumstances by Marianna Segati. If he congratulated himself for a day or two on the fortunate arrangement of his differences with the Count Guiccioli, and turned his thoughts hopefully to England, whither he had all along determined to go, on the quick or tardy conclusion of his engagement to the Countess, the exultation was soon followed by melancholy and annoyance at having dismissed her prematurely. Whilst Byron languished and fretted at Venice, making his arrangements for the return to England with gloomy forebodings of a cold reception in his native country, Teresa Guiccioli was again dying of consumption at Ravenna. Weeping and pining and fretting the unhappy girl either became so seriously ill, or acted serious illness so excellently well, that her husband, her father (Count Gamba), her uncle (Marquis Cavalli), and the other chiefs of her domestic circle believed her dying. Of course there was a renewal between the separated lovers of the correspondence, which they had promised never to reopen. Whilst Byron's tender effusions only deepened the Contessa's despair, her plaintive prayers

for him to visit her, once again before she breathed her last breath, overpowered the poet's waning prudence and wavering fortitude.

With significant slowness Byron had at length made all his arrangements for returning to England. He had selected his route, and announced to friends in England that he was on the point of journeying to them ; his boxes were actually on board the gondola, when, as he stood at the head of the staircase, with gloves on his hands and cap on his head, he changed his mind less from force of passion than imbecility of purpose. Even at that moment, when by rousing his combativeness any opposition to his resolve might have stimulated him to persist in it, he wavered away from the path he had chosen. 'If it strike one before everything is in order, I won't go to-day !' he said, when something still remained to be done for the preparation of his arms. The hour striking before the arms were quite ready, he said, 'I stay here !' Hoppner stated the case fairly when he said that at the last it depended on the toss of a halfpenny whether the poet followed the Countess to Ravenna, or returned to England. The woman who hesitates is lost. Byron was a fanciful and hysterical woman in one half of his nature, and at times was the mere plaything of feminine fickleness and emotionality. He hesitated, and lost the tide that might have floated him back to his proper place in English society. On the morrow came the letter, inviting him to hasten to Ravenna, to accept the office of *cicisbeo* to Teresa Guiccioli. The invitation was accepted ; and instead of returning to England he went to Ravenna, where he was welcomed by Teresa's relatives to a place of

affectionate, if not honourable, regard in their circle. To show him proper respect, some three hundred people of the best families of Romagna were invited by Teresa's uncle, the Marquis Cavalli, to a grand reception, where music, dancing, and play went on in the same splendid *salle*. 'The Guiccioli's object,' he wrote to Hoppner on the last day of 1819, 'appeared to be to parade her foreign friend as much as possible, and, faith, if she seemed to glory in so doing, it was not for me to be ashamed of it. Nobody seemed surprised :—all the women, on the contrary, were, as it were, delighted with the excellent example. The vice-legate, and all the other vices, were as polite as could be :—and I, who had acted on the reserve, was fairly obliged to take the lady under my arm, and look as much like a *cicisbeo* as I could on so short a notice,—to say nothing of the embarrassment of a cocked hat and sword.'

The only course, by which the husband who sanctioned this arrangement, could avoid the universal contempt of his own people, was taken by the Count Guiccioli. Having greeted Teresa's foreign lover with cordiality as well as courtesy, the Count displayed a strong desire to live with him on terms of affection as well as of intimacy. At the Count's invitation, Byron towards the close of January 1820 gave up his rooms at the '*Albergo Imperiale*,' and took possession of a suite of apartments in the Palazzo Guiccioli ;—an arrangement that was the less disagreeable to the owner of the palace, as his lordly lodger paid a good rent for the rooms. Close resemblances are often discernible in the manners and morality of the different social grades. On first

coming to Venice in November 1816 Byron, lodging in a linendraper's best rooms, had taken the tradesman's wife for his mistress, with the sanction of her husband. At Ravenna he had for his mistress the wife of a wealthy noble, in whose palace he took lodgings. Resembling one another in letting their spare rooms to the foreigner, the Romagnese Count and the Venetian linendraper resembled each other also in marital complaisance.

## CHAPTER IV.

## RAVENNA.

The Palazzo Guiccioli—Byron's Feelings for Teresa—Italian Politics—The Carbonari—Count Guiccioli's Virtuous Indignation—Teresa's Revolt against her Husband—The Decree of Separation—Byron's Political Prescience—The Capo of the Americani—The Revolutionary Movement—Its Failure—The Black Sentence and Proscription—Teresa in Exile—Byron's Slowness in following Her—Allegra at Bagna Cavallo—Poetic Fecundity at Ravenna—Migration from Ravenna to Pisa.

INCLUDING the six weeks spent in the trip to Rome and the three months of the visit to Romagna, Byron's sojourn at Venice (from the middle of November 1816 to the middle of December 1819) covered just three years and one month. Coming (for the second time) to Ravenna shortly before the Christmas of 1819, he resided there for something more than a year and ten months,—occupying till his departure for Pisa (29 October, 1821) 'the splendid apartments in the palace of Count Guiccioli' where he received the author of 'Queen Mab' in the August of the last-mentioned year, and 'living,' as Shelley wrote to his wife, 'in considerable splendour, but within his income of about 4000*l.* a-year, 1000*l.* of which he devoted to purposes of charity.' Possibly the elder of the two poets in giving his friend the particulars of his income and expenditure put some of his contributions to brethren of the Carbonari



under the heading of benevolence. But there is a concurrence of evidences that Byron (whose freaks of parsimony never seem to have been indulged to the exclusion of the indigent from his sympathy and assistance) gave alms so freely to the people of the town and neighbourhood throughout his stay at Ravenna, that his munificence provoked the suspicion of the police, whilst it covered him with the blessings of the poor.

As he could gossip lightly of the Contessa's constitutional peculiarities in an earlier and more romantic stage of his passion for the lady, it is not surprising that soon after his second coming to Ravenna Byron, in writing to Consul-General Hoppner, spoke of Teresa with curious coolness, as a person to whose imperfections he was not absolutely insensible, and of his association with her as an arrangement that might end at any moment. Even whilst he was in the full enjoyment of a novel position, accepting the hospitalities of the Contessa's relations, and 'drilling very hard how to double a shawl' with the adroitness of a gallant *cicisbeo*, he wrote to the Consul-General on January 20, 1820, 'I have not decided anything about remaining at Ravenna. I may stay a day, a week, a year, all my life; but all this depends upon what I neither see nor foresee. I came because I was called, and will go the moment I see what may render my departure proper. My attachment has neither the blindness of the beginning, nor the microscopic accuracy of the close to such liaisons; but "time and the hour" must decide what I do. I can as yet say nothing, because I hardly know anything beyond what I have told you.' One

needs microscopic inaccuracy to discern in these words the devotion by which the poet is alleged by Moore to have been animated towards the Countess Guiccioli. Even the poet's declaration (made to Moore on May 24, 1820) of his strong attachment to the lady, when she was in the middle of her quarrel with her husband, is accompanied with a large prudential reserve. 'I should have retreated,' he says, 'but honour, and an erysipelas which has attacked her, prevent me,—to say nothing of love, for I love her most entirely, though not enough to persuade her to sacrifice everything in a frenzy.' After the papal decree, that separated the Count and Countess, Byron wrote to Moore on August 31, 1820, 'I only meant to be a *Cavalier Servente*, and had no idea it would turn out a romance, in the Anglo fashion ;' a noteworthy admission to the biographer, who insists that real love was a *motif* in the liaison from its commencement. The only persons likely to take Moore's view of the affair, after considering the quotations of this paragraph together with the data of the previous chapter, must be persons with a singular aptitude for believing what they please, in the teeth of evidence to the contrary.

It is less surprising that in the course of a few months Count Guiccioli required his wife to dismiss her *cicisbeo*, than that he permitted her to introduce the poet in his official character to her relations, and invite him to take up his quarters under her roof. Mindful of the difference of their ages, and aware that her powerful relatives would hold him accountable for any scandal which might ensue from his want of deference to her wishes, the Count could scarcely deny

his Countess a *carulier servente*. In truth the usages of the *cicisbeat* had their origin in social tenderness for women in her position, quite as much as in social consideration for husbands in his predicament or in any general sympathy for masculine libertinism. Under these circumstances, on being required to allow his wife to avail herself of a practice that had at least the sanction of social tolerance, the Count may well have been disposed to approve of Teresa's choice of an official admirer,—and at least, to be thankful she had chosen a person whose rank and celebrity would enhance the lustre of their circle, whilst his wealth might conduce to her husband's enrichment. It is also conceivable that he was charmed by the Englishman's aspect and address, and conceived himself an object of the poet's most flattering regard. In the earlier months of his attachment to Teresa, Byron had of course exerted himself to conciliate the lordly owner of the coach and six horses. On coming for the second time to Ravenna, he had of course approached the Count with his best smiles and a thousand delicate blandishments. And when it pleased him to wear his best manners for their management, Byron could be no less charming to men than to women. The Count therefore had more than one reason for thinking favourably of the English poet who was ready to pay handsomely for the splendid rooms assigned to him in the Palazzo Guiccioli.

According to the unreliable 'Conversations,' Byron asserted that, after winking at his intimacy with Teresa for a considerable time, the Count made exceptions to him 'as a foreigner, a heretic, an Englishman, and what was worse than all a liberal.' On

coming to differ with him, the Count probably disliked him all the more for each of these reasons. But the Count had welcomed the poet, with a perfect knowledge that he was an Englishman, a free-thinker, and a liberal. The Count, however, can scarcely have anticipated that the English liberal would soon exhibit his liberalism by an activity in Italian politics, that for more than twelve months made the Palazzo Guiccioli a place of reunion for the Romagnese Carbonari. Byron is represented to have told Medwin that the Count would have continued to acquiesce in the liaison, had his wife's gallant been an Italian. But, though Byron may have said so in all sincerity or to 'bam' his listener, no discreet reader will believe that, had Teresa's *cicisbeo* been an Italian, the Count would have acquiesced in proceedings that, by making his palace a centre of conspiracy against the government, made it an object of suspicion to the police and may well have caused its owner to be suspected of participating in the counsels and projects of the Carbonari. It is significant of the order and relation of events at the Palazzo Guiccioli that Byron's letters to his English correspondents afford evidence of his lively concern in Italian politics for some weeks before they contain references to the Count's desire to be quit of his troublesome lodger :—no easy matter for the Count, of whom Byron had hired the splendid apartments on terms that secured him from sudden and capricious ejection.

On April 16, 1820, after begging Murray for prompt acknowledgment of the receipt of certain copy, the poet says, 'I have, besides, another reason for desiring you to be speedy, which is, that there is THAT

brewing in Italy which will speedily cut off all security of communication, and set all your Anglo-travellers flying in every direction, with their usual fortitude in foreign tumults. . . . I shall, if permitted by the natives, remain to see what will come of it, and perhaps to take a turn with them, like Dugald Dalgetty and his horse, in case of business; for I shall think it by far the most interesting spectacle and moment in existence, to see the Italians send the barbarians of all nations back to their own dens. . . . No Italian can hate an Austrian more than I do: unless it be the English, the Austrians seem to me the most obnoxious race under the sky. . . . Write while you can; for it is but the toss up of a paul that there will not be a row that will somewhat retard the mail by-and-by.'—A week later the poet writes to his publisher (April 23, 1820), 'We are on the verge of a *row* here. Last night they have over-written all the city walls with "Up with the republic!" and "Death to the Pope!" &c., &c., &c. This would be nothing in London, where the walls are privileged. But here it is a different thing: they are not used to such fierce political descriptions, and the police is all on the alert, and the Cardinal glares pale through all his purple. . . . April 24, 1820, 8 o'clock P.M. The police have been, all noon and after, searching for the inscribers, but have caught none as yet. They must have been all night about it, for the "Live republics—Death to Popes and Priests" are innumerable, and plastered over all the palaces: ours has plenty. There is "Down with the Nobility!" too; they are down enough already, for that matter.'—Five weeks, *less* one day (May 20, 1820), after the

date of the first of these notes, the poet writes, 'The Countess G. is on the eve of being separated.'

In April 1820. the Count Guiccioli found himself in a position alike ludicrous and exasperating,—peculiarly exasperating because it was so unutterably ridiculous. In his desire to make money out of his wife's *cicisbeo*, he had invited the English poet to reside under his roof; and Byron had scarcely acted on the invitation and found himself the temporary master of the best rooms of the Count's palace, than he made haste to busy himself in Italian politics in a way that made the house a head-quarters of the Carbonari, and exposed its owner to suspicion of complicity in his tenant's doings. By a slip of the pen, Karl Elze, speaks of 'the Guiccioli family' as favouring Carbonarism. and attributes the poet's participation in the conspiracy to his warm sympathy with the family. The Gambas (father and son) were zealous chiefs of the secret league, though Byron (playing with the dupe he delighted to 'bam') gravely assured poor Tom Medwin that they 'took no part in the affair' which resulted in their proscription. Teresa went heart and soul with her father and brother into the political movement. But the Gambas were not the Guiccioli family. To the rich Count Guiccioli, with nothing to gain from a successful revolution and much to lose from participation in an abortive attempt at one, conspiracy against the existing government was by no means the attractive enterprise that it was to the needy Gambas whose best hope of brighter fortunes lay in the movement for a change of rulers. Had Count Guiccioli been of one mind with his wife's brother and father,

the significant menace, 'Down with the Nobility!' would not have been inscribed on the walls of his palace. Between the secret friends of the Gambas and Teresa's English gallant, who were threatening him with the extinction of the nobility, and the agents of the papal government who treated him with ominous reserve whilst they set spies to watch his house and visitors, the Count Guiccioli was in an awkward predicament, and had reason to curse the hour when he invited Byron to come within his walls.

To be quit of so ineligible an inmate, the Count required Teresa to dismiss her admirer.—a demand that drew from her a refusal to do any such thing. The immediate result of the lady's mutiny against her husband was that he feigned astonishment at her devotion to a man whom he had imagined her to regard with mere feelings of friendship. One can imagine the scornful laughter this affectation provoked from Teresa. But her derision only whipt the Count to declare with greater vehemence his abhorrence of her wickedness; his impression that his own social qualities had alone drawn Byron to Ravenna; his dismay at discovering his wife's betrayer in the perfidious Englishman; his determination to sue for a decree of separation from her, if she did not forthwith order her paramour to be off. From the Count, to whom she gave only words of ridicule and aversion, Teresa hastened to Byron who (according to his own accounts of the affair) urged her to obey the dictates of prudence rather than the impulse of love—to pitch him over, and, making up the quarrel with her husband, to live with him on terms of apparent affectionateness. 'I will stay with him,'

Teresa answered, 'if he will let you remain with me. It is hard that I should be the only woman in Romagna who is not to have her *Amico*; but, if not, I will *not* live with him; and as for the consequences,— . . . . 'Tut!'

The stir of Ravenna's little world was prodigious. Scarcely a man in all Romagna had a word to say for the Count, who was rendering himself contemptible by feigning surprise at his wife's liaison with a foreigner. Teresa had her own sex on her side almost to a woman;—the ladies declaring it intolerable that, after first conniving at the affair and then openly sanctioning it, the Count should now presume to have a voice in the matter. As Teresa would not yield, the Count prepared to put his threat in execution. But in his steps for getting a separation he encountered two difficulties. There was no *sufficient* evidence of facts, that would have to be proved without inferential aid before the Papal court could decide in his favour. Another and more humiliating difficulty was that the Count could not find an advocate to undertake his cause; 'the whole bar' (as one would say in England) being of opinion that so miserable a plaintiff—fool if he was really unaware of the liaison, rogue and paltry hypocrite if he knew of the matter all along—should be left to plead his own cause. Pressure of some sort was of course put on Byron to end the scandal by withdrawing from Ravenna. But in considerations of love and honour he found sufficient reasons for remaining by Teresa's side and under her husband's roof. In truth, the game was so flattering to his vanity and so diverting to his sense of humour, that he could not deny



himself the pleasure of playing at it a little longer. The Count Guiccioli having already declined to settle the matter by a duel with his father-in-law (old Count Gamba), there was no hope for a settlement of the dispute by means of a duel between the lady's husband and her admirer. But though the Count was not likely to 'call' the poet 'out,' he was thought capable of sending a bravo to waylay Byron during one of his daily rides in the pine-forest. Teresa's husband being suspected of having in former time perpetrated two assassinations by deputy, Byron was strongly advised to be on his guard and have his pistols ready for immediate use when he rode through the immemorial pines. Though he affected to think himself guarded from assassination by the covetousness of the Count, who had not the courage to spend twenty scudi on a clean-handed cut-throat, the poet after this friendly warning never omitted to look to his 'primings' before he put his feet in the stirrups.

Eventually the conflict was ended by the act of the lady who, in opposition to the wishes of some of her friends, petitioned the Court for the very fate with which the Count had threatened her. To heighten the comicality of the whole business, Teresa's prayer for separation was resisted stoutly by her husband, who by making the most of his wrongs hoped to escape an order of the Court for payment of alimony. In this, however, he was disappointed. In consideration of his extraordinary behaviour, in first conniving at her misbehaviour and then oppressing her with scandalous exposure, the Court, whilst granting Teresa's prayer for separation, ordered him to return her trifling portion, surrender her carriage and

jewels, and pay her an alimony of 200*l.* a-year ; it being further provided by the decree that she should henceforth reside under her father's roof and protection or retire to a cloister.

In consequence of this decree (delivered at Rome and published at Ravenna a few days later, July 12, 1820), Teresa Guiccioli, still only seventeen years of age, withdrew to her father's villa (some fifteen miles distant from the city of her birth), where she resided for several months, receiving two or three visits in the course of each month from her lover, who continued to live in the palazzo of the Count, whose domestic affairs he had disturbed in so remarkable a manner. However distasteful and vexatious this arrangement may have been to the lady, who would of course have preferred to see her lover oftener and for longer visits, it was neither 'unwelcome' (as Moore admits) to the poet, nor unfavourable to her power over him. A day or two of Teresa's company once a fortnight was probably enough for the contentment of the worshipper, whose passion was more likely to be quickened than quenched by the successive intervals of absence ; and it is conceivable that a few months later when she was living under her father's roof in Ravenna, within a few hundred yards of the palace of which she had ceased to be the mistress, the poet missed the excitement of the fortnightly gallops to the remote villa, and wished her at a distance that would have exempted him from the obligation to visit her daily. Leigh Hunt suggests that (as the stipulation for Teresa's residence in her father's house or a convent must have been intended to separate her from Byron no less effectually than the decree itself

separated her from her husband), the arrangement, which defeated the purpose of the condition whilst complying with its letter, cannot have been anticipated by the Pope and must have been offensive to serious and devout Catholics. But though Count Gamba's action in winking at the liaison may have displeased many of his neighbours, there is no reason for supposing that the stratagem of the lovers occasioned surprise to the framers of the decree. On the contrary, there are grounds for a rather strong opinion that the Papal authorities were fully prepared for the avoidance of the ostensible object of the stipulation, and even made the condition in order that its apparent purpose should be so avoided. Anyhow, instead of forbidding the arrangement by which Byron had the enjoyment of his mistress with her father's sanction, the Vice-Legate and his associates exhibited significant indifference to the irregularity, which they turned adroitly to their advantage when they wished to elbow the poet out of Romagna.

It speaks much for Byron's political prescience that he believed Greece might still be free, when to hold the opinion was to be rated with mere visionaries and enthusiasts by serious statesmen, and that, writing 'The Prophecy of Dante' more than half a century before Rome became the capital of reunited Italy, he penned the glorious verses,—

'Oh ! my own beauteous land ! so long laid low,  
 So long the grave of thy own children's hopes,  
 When there is but required a single blow  
 To break the chain, yet—yet the Avenger stops,  
 And Doubt and Discord step 'twixt thine and thee,  
 And join their strength to that which with thee copes ;

What is there wanting then to set thee free,  
And show thy beauty in its fullest light ?  
To make the Alps impassable ; and we,  
Her sons, may do this with *one* deed —— Unite.'

And it detracts nothing from this prescience and the honour due to it, to say that in the domain of politics Byron was a sentimentalist, in the best and finest sense of the word, who after choosing his party from sympathy, was more indebted for his political principles and convictions to emotional influences than to passionless deliberation. That men are more obedient to sentiment than to facts was a favourite maxim with the Younger Disraeli, whose influence over his contemporaries was largely due to a fine apprehensiveness of the poetry underlying familiar things, and an habitual disposition to discover a sentimental significance and value in the matters, that are mere matters of course to official underlings who, living wholly in them, seldom look an inch beyond them. Accountable for the steadiness and consistency, that in politics distinguished the man of dangerous 'mobility,' the force, which inspires multitudes with a single purpose and causes millions to move like one, was scarcely more operative in the sensitive and imaginative Byron at moments when he was wholly a poet, than at moments when he tried to be only a politician. It was the source of the enthusiasm that, carrying him into the ranks of the Italian Carbonari, made him a participator in their miserably insufficient preparations for a noble enterprise. It was the source of the less sanguine impulse that determined him to fight in Greece for a cause, of whose success he was far less confident than desirous.

It was also the light by which he foresaw events, neither hoped for nor imagined by the commonplace politicians who, with all their assiduity and usefulness, are mere manipulators of affairs lying immediately under their noses.

Under any circumstances and in every quarter of the world, this political sentimentalist would have played a similar part, or none at all, in the political arena. For the morbid selfishness, which in Hobhouse's opinion was the darkest stain on his friend's character, had nothing in common with the sordid selfishness, which in every community disposes the baser sort of prosperous people to side in politics with the prevailing party, simply because it is the stronger party. Had his nature possessed no other endowments making for benevolence, his sensibility and superabundant compassionateness would by themselves have saved him from becoming an unsympathetic churl or callous despot. So sensitive to the sufferings of others as to be incapable of witnessing physical pain without shrinking from it, or regarding any kind of mental distress without longing to relieve it, the poet, who had a tear for every grief and a coin for every mendicant, and who, retaining to the last his early propensity for protecting his inferiors, spoilt his servants by indulgence whilst he made playmates of their children,—was precisely the man to feel intense pity for the victims and intense hatred for the doers of oppression;—albeit, in his fits of gusty anger and his longer moods of sullen rage, he could be wildly violent and cruel to the individuals who provoked his animosity in personal matters.

Whilst pity impelled him to embrace the weak.

combativeness and passionate intolerance of injustice disposed him to battle with the strong. At Ravenna, where he enjoyed the confidence of the nobles who favoured the conspiracy, and was worshipfully regarded by the peasantry whom he conciliated by lordly munificence and gracious bearing,—nobles amongst whom he found persons of culture and lofty sentiment; a peasantry under whose rudeness and ignorance he discovered courage and affectionateness.—it was natural for a man so sympathetic and fervid to espouse the cause of a people, groaning under the grievances of execrable misgovernment. Led by the contemplation of the troubles of Italy to brood mournfully over the wrongs done and endured in every region of the earth's surface, it is not wonderful that, on closing the survey of man's cruelty to man, he threw himself into a movement which promised to stay the growth of human iniquity and to diminish the sum of human wretchedness in southern Europe.

It would, however, be a mistake to suppose that no considerations of personal interest and ambition mingled with the loftier aims and impulses of benevolence that determined the poet's action towards the Italian patriots. Though he would have favoured the Carbonari from sincere and romantic devotion to freedom, and in the absence of all other motives would have embraced their enterprise from enthusiastic approval of its principles and object, there can be no question that Byron was regardful of his own advantage in furthering the movement for the advantage of Italy. To the poet, acutely remorseful for his Venetian excesses, service in so righteous a cause was all the more congenial from the consideration that it

would probably enable him to recover, together with his own self-respect, that large portion of the world's respect which had been withdrawn from the tenant of the Palazzo Mocenigo. Should insurrection result in revolution, and the revolution be glorified with success, no small portion of the honour of the achievement would pertain to the English peer who, coming to the aid of the patriots almost at the inception of their enterprise, had lent them money, provided them with arms, and led them to victory on hard-fought fields. Covered with fame and glory he would return to England in triumph, to receive the applause ever given ungrudgingly in the land of freedom to successful liberators. Instead of reappearing in London, unheralded and unannounced, doubtful of his welcome and apprehensive of slights, to live at first in comparative seclusion with a few old friends, and then to feel his way with delicate and timorous steps back into society, he would be greeted at Dover with acclamations, and find himself the idol of a party, if something less than the hero of the nation. Even though it should miscarry, a campaign for Italian freedom would exhibit him in an honourable light, and afford him opportunities for figuring amongst men of action. At the worst, it would divert attention from the least creditable passages of his career, and yield him an auspicious occasion for resuming his old *rôle* of the hero of his own poems. At the best, it might invest him with the pomp and power of a military dictator, and render his name no less terrible to monarchs in their capitals than to the curates of English villages. In his boyhood, when his regiment of 'Byron's blacks' used to turn the

fortune of imaginary fields, he nursed hopes of martial distinction ; and to the last, the tinsel and toys of war had a fascination for the poet, who, after emptying the vials of his scorn on such vulgar heroes as Suwarrow and Wellington, bought the three gilt helmets (that tickled Leigh Hunt's malicious humour), and died the commander-in-chief of a nation fighting for freedom. One of the curious features of his story is the disregard, quickened sometimes to angry disdain, in which he held the writer's vocation. Assuming it in the first instance for youthful vanity, to astonish his school-fellows and win the approval of young ladies, he to the last rated the pen as little more than a plaything,—using it by turns for sport and malice ; valuing it fitfully as a weapon ; but never honouring it steadily as the sacred and only instrument for the loftiest and largest aims of his ambition. Even when he was meditating the lines (to be placed amongst the manliest and most sincere of all his egotistic verses)

‘ I twine

My hopes of being remember'd in my line  
 With my land's language ; if too fond and far  
 These aspirations in their scope incline,—  
 If my fame should be, as my fortunes are,  
 Of hasty growth and blight, and dull Oblivion bar  
 My name from out the temple where the dead  
 Are honour'd by the nations—let it be—  
 And light the laurels on a loftier head !—’

he was wishful for a renown to which the deathless productions of his poetical genius would be mere matters of subsidiary beauty, like the traceries of the chisel on a superb work of Gothic architecture. ‘ If I live,’ he wrote to Moore on February 28th, 1817,



at the very time when the reviewers were busy with the poem, containing those lines, ‘ten years longer, you will see, however, that it is not over with me—I don’t mean in literature, for that is nothing; and it may seem odd enough to say, I do not think it my vocation. But you will see that I shall do something or other—the times and fortune permitting—that, “like the cosmogony or creation of the world, will puzzle the philosophers of all ages.” But I doubt whether my constitution will hold out.’ Other passages of similar purport may be found in the letters of the poet. From 1814, when he gave orders for the suppression of all his writings, to 1823, when on his departure for Greece he congratulated himself on having done at last with scribbling, Byron was perpetually looking away from the labours, that will ever cause his name to be remembered in his line with his land’s language, for some field of enterprise in which, without the pen’s aid, by deeds instead of words, he might build up a renown, nobler and more satisfying to his moral aspirations than the fame that, surprising him in a morning and growing with every moon, had been even more fruitful of sorrow to his heart than of flattery to his pride. Sometimes the dreamer’s fancy turned to South America as a scene for exploits of chivalric adventure and romantic benevolence. At other times it played about the rocks and valleys of some island of the Grecian archipelago, whose people he would rule with gentle sway and patriarchal dignity. At Ravenna he saw in the revolutionary movement an opening to a career that, gratifying his strong desire for the only kind of martial honour for which he had any appetite whatever,—the glory to

be won in battles for freedom,—would purge his fame of the stains put upon it by passion and uncleanness, and give him place amongst the heroes of humanity.—Moreover, in the survey of the forces that carried Byron into the ranks of the Carbonari, allowance must be made for his need of some fierce though pure excitement to replace the agitations of sensual intemperance. Allowance must also be made for the influence of the poet's liking for Pietro Gamba (Teresa's brother), a young Italian whose patriotic fervour was associated with charms of appearance and address, that would under any circumstances have commended him to the affectionate regard of his sister's admirer.

Welcomed to their ranks by the Carbonari with the consideration due to his rank and celebrity, Byron, without being required to pass through the subordinate degrees, was appointed to be a chief of his division, the *Americani*. Speaking of conspirators thus placed under his command the poet wrote to Murray on Sept. 4. 1821: 'The "*Mericiani*," of whom they call me the Capo (or Chief), mean Americans, which is the name given in *Romagna* to a part of the Carbonari; that is to say, to the *popular* part, the *troops* of the Carbonari. They were originally a society of hunters in the forest, who took the name of Americans, but at present comprise some thousands, &c.; but I shan't let you further into the secret, which may be participated by the postmasters. Why they thought me their Chief, I know not: their Chiefs are like Legion, being many. However, it is a post of more honour than profit, for, now that they are persecuted, it is fit I should aid them; and so I

have done, as far as my means would permit. They will rise again some day, for these fools of the government are blundering; they actually seem to know *nothing*; for they have arrested and banished many of their own party, and let others escape who are not their friends.' In the next paragraph the writer asks, 'What think'st thou of Greece?'—a question to be remembered as evidence that, if he was not meditating some such adventure as the expedition which cost him his life, the poet was watching with interest the affairs of Greece before he quitted Ravenna.

The poet having attained the dignity of 'Capo' of the Americani, the palace, from which he had ousted in so strange a way the host and hostess who had welcomed him to it a few months earlier, became the head-quarters of the revolutionary movement in Ravenna, whilst little Allegra and her nurse remained its inmates. Conspirators came with secrecy for conference with the 'Capo,' who, delighting in the romance of the affair and the novelty of his position, spoke enthusiastically of the enterprise as 'the poetry of politics.' Spies also found their way into the Palazzo, who hastened from the 'Capo's' chamber of audience to the chiefs of the Ravennese police,—persons much better informed than Byron imagined of all that was done under the Count Guiccioli's roof. One of these fellows is supposed to have played his assumed part of an agent of the Constitutional Government of Naples so adroitly, as to receive from the poet the following address to the Neapolitan Government,—'An Englishman, a friend to liberty, having understood that

the Neapolitans permit even foreigners to contribute to the good cause, is desirous that they should do him the honour of accepting a thousand louis, which he takes the liberty of offering. Having already, not long since, been an ocular witness of the despotism of the Barbarians in the States occupied by them in Italy, he sees, with the enthusiasm natural to a cultivated man, the generous determination of the Neapolitans to assert their well-won independence. As a member of the English House of Peers, he would be a traitor to the principles which placed the reigning family of England on the throne, if he were not grateful for the noble lesson so lately given both to people and to kings. The offer which he desires to make is small in itself, as must always be that presented from an individual to a nation; but he trusts that it will not be the last they will receive from his countrymen. His distance from the frontier, and the feeling of his personal incapacity to contribute efficaciously to the service of the nation, prevents him from proposing himself as worthy of the lowest commission, for which experience and talent might be requisite. But if, as a mere volunteer, his presence were not a burden to whomsoever he might serve under, he would repair to whatever place the Neapolitan Government might point out, there to obey the orders and participate in the dangers of his commanding officer, without any other motive than that of sharing the destiny of a brave nation, defending itself against the self-called Holy Alliance, which but combines the vice of hypocrisy with despotism.'

Having written to Murray on May 8, 1820, that he should possibly visit England in the autumn,

should Italy be quiet, Byron found 'the poetry of politics' far too exciting in August 1820, for him to think of running just then from Ravenna to London. 'We are going to fight a little next month, if the Huns don't cross the Po, and probably if they do. I can't say more now. If anything happens, you have matter for a posthumous work in MS. ; so pray be civil!' he wrote to the publisher on the 31st of the last-named month. Twenty-three days later, the same correspondent was assured that should 'the Germans pass the Po, they will be treated to a mass out of Cardinal de Retz's *Breviary*.' On September 28, 1820, the 'Capo' at Ravenna wrote to Albemarle Street, 'Politics here still savage and uncertain. However, we are all in our "bandaliers," to join the "Highlanders if they cross the Forth," *i.e.* to crush the Austrians if they cross the Po.' Waxing fiercer and more abusive as the year neared its end, the poet wrote more and more truculently of the barbarians with a fool for their emperor. The 9th evening of December heard the shot that laid the Commandant of Ravenna dead on the stones, within two hundred paces of the Palazzo Guiccioli, and almost under the eyes of the poet who caused the victim of assassination to be taken from the cold pavement to a bed within the palace. Fighting seemed a mere question of minutes on January 7, 1821, when Pietro Gamba took Byron aside at a conversazione, and whispered him the government meant that very night to make arrests that would be resisted by the patriots ;—news which caused Byron to sit through the night, expecting to hear the drums and musquetry every moment. On the morrow (January 8, 1821) the Capo of the

Americani was giving out arms to Pietro Gamba, and arranging that in case of a row the liberals should rally at his house, and advising his confederates to attack in detail, and to divide the attention of the troops by dividing themselves into small parties and fighting at different points at the same time. Fifteen days later (January 23, 1821) Byron jotted on leaves of his diary, 'Heard of nothing but war—the cry is still, "They come." The Carì seem to have no plan—nothing fixed amongst themselves, how, when, or what to do. In that case they will make nothing of this project, so often postponed, and never put in action. Came home, and gave some necessary orders in case of circumstances requiring a change of place. I shall act according to what may seem proper, when I hear decidedly what the Barbarians mean to do. At present, they are building a bridge of boats over the Po, which looks very warlike.' At this moment the diarist thought of moving towards Ancona, should Teresa and her father be compelled to retire; he was in doubt what to do with Allegra; and disgusted at the preparations for the Carnival, whilst 'half the City are getting their affairs in marching trim.' Another twenty-four hours, and 'the Germans are on the Po,' whilst the principal liberals of the city and surrounding country were away on a shooting party.—no 'pretext of the chase for a grand reunion of counsellors and chiefs,' which would have been well, but 'nothing more or less than a real, snivelling, popping, small-shot, water-hen waste of powder, ammunition and shot, for their own special amusement.'

By this time it was manifest to Byron that the movement would do him no credit. Despondent for the

insurrection he became querulous about his private affairs,—the loss of a lawsuit touching his Lancashire property, and the miscarriage of his project for the investment of money, in the hands of his wife's trustees, on mortgage of Lord Blessington's Dublin property, being two vexatious incidents of the previous year. 'In the same year, 1820,' the diarist continues with significant bitterness, 'the Countess T. G., *nata* G<sup>a</sup> Gi *in despite of all I said and did to prevent it*, would separate from her husband: '—a memorandum no less eloquent of the writer's morbid selfishness, than of Teresa's loss of influence over him. Seven months had not passed since the decree for the Contessa's separation from her husband; and already Byron was repenting of the liaison, and regarding the separation as a serious *contretemps*. Worse still, he was resenting the wilfulness of the lady who, in spite of his expostulations, had encumbered him with affection he no longer valued, and with obligations he could not easily avoid!

For another month, keeping his forebodings of ludicrous failure to himself, Byron did his best to encourage the patriots who, in the absence of discipline, organization, clearness of purpose and sufficient leaders, lacked the most important requisites for success. There were moments when he hoped that after all matters would go less ill than he feared with the insurrection. Of the enthusiasm of his 'Americani' he had no cause to complain; and he was willing to believe that the spirit of Italy declared itself in the ringing cheers with which they greeted him at one of their meetings in the forest. The rumour that Piedmont had risen was glad tidings. Things seemed coming to a crisis on the 30th of January, when the

poet wrote in his diary, 'The ferment in men's minds at present cannot be conceived without seeing it.' On hearing that the Germans were concentrating at Mantua and would be crossing the Po on the 15th of February the chiefs of the Romagnese Carbonari determined to resist the passage. 'The Germans are ordered to march,' the poet wrote in his journal under date of February 5, 'and Italy is for the ten thousandth time to become a field of battle.' But for all these brave words there was no battle, and the barbarians crossed the river without opposition on the 7th day of the month, eight full days before they were expected to appear in force on the northern bank. Having made their arrangements on instructions from the Neapolitan Government, the Romagnese liberals seem to have been blameless for the miscarriage that robbed them of their opportunity. Had the fault been with them, the result could scarcely have been more painful and exasperating to the more fervid and sanguine of the Romagnese Carbonari, who saw the Germans, some fifty or sixty thousand strong, march past them. Byron tried to hope that the Neapolitans would make a stubborn resistance, in which case the invaders would soon find themselves attacked in their rear by the thousands of gallant fellows, who for the moment could only stand aside and wait for news from the south. He tried also to persuade himself that fifty or sixty thousand troops, however well disciplined and well equipped, 'might as well attempt to conquer the world as secure Italy in its present state.' There was brave talk in Ravenna of an attempt to cut off the invaders' artillery, if news should come in another day or two that the Neapolitans were up and



doing. But trains of artillery are not captured by saucy words, and the army of sixty thousand men was sufficient in every respect for the work it had in hand. On the 24th of February, Byron had the doleful news which he condensed into four words, 'The plan has missed.' The conspiracy that should have been fruitful of revolution had barely yielded an insurrection.

Before the disastrous intelligence came to him from the South, Byron had discovered how little reliance could be placed on the fervour of the Ravennese patriots. At the opening of February, when there were hopes of an immediate rising in Romagna, he had spent a considerable sum on bayonets, muskets and ammunition, that were hastily distributed amongst those of the conspirators who were too poor to arm themselves. A few days later, when the Germans had crossed the river and were marching down south, the Government issued a proclamation that persons found in possession of arms without lawful authority for bearing them would be dealt with as participators in the insurrection :—an announcement that, filling the Ravennese with alarm, made them chiefly desirous to be rid of the weapons which they had so recently seized with valorous emotion. Hastening to the Palazzo Guiccioli the patriots, who had been equipped at the poet's expense, insisted on being relieved of the arms and powder, that in another hour might bring them to ruin. Absent from home when these excited people flocked to his palace, Byron had no need to ask what had taken place when on his return he found in the lower rooms of his residence the tools and munitions of warfare that had been thus hastily and

without a word of forewarning thrown back upon his hands. Fortunately the arms had been received by Lega and two other servants, of whose fidelity he had no suspicion, in the absence of those of his retainers who, in the altered state of affairs, would have immediately reported the incident to the police.

The suppression of the insurrection was of course followed by the stern measures of vengeance and policy, that are the ordinary as well as dismal consequences of unsuccessful revolt. Byron's peculiar faculty for discovering an outrageous grievance in every matter-of-course that interfered in any way with his personal convenience must be held largely accountable for the extravagant terms in which he wrote to Hoppner and Murray of the ferocious malignity, that animated the Papal Government towards the unfortunate Carbonari. From the violence of some of his letters on this subject, one might suppose that the chiefs of the conspiracy had been guilty of nothing worse than a little rash talk, instead of nursing a scheme for civil war and revolution. If the 'black sentence and proscription' had not included the Gambas, the poet would have been less indignant at the merciless edicts that 'exiled about a thousand people of the best families all over the Roman States;' and his concern for the Gambas was quickened and intensified by concern for himself. Whether their sentence of banishment was accompanied with confiscation of their slender possessions (as Medwin represents), or was *not* so accompanied (as Hobbhouse asserts in the 'Westminster Review' article), the Gambas had nothing to complain of in the punishment, for which they must have been prepared, when

they first committed themselves to the conspiracy. should the enterprise miscarry. Nor do they seem to have felt astonishment at the decree of exile. or to have claimed sympathy for being in any unusual way the victims of injustice. Byron, however, saw much to complain of in the order of banishment that disturbed his domestic arrangements, and made it less easy for him to withdraw from an association, that was already yielding him more disquiet than contentment.

Even Byron could not venture to charge the Papal Government with precipitancy of action towards the Gambas. More than four months had passed since the suppression of the insurrection, when in the middle of July 1821, Teresa's father and brother were ordered to quit the Pope's dominions, Teresa Guiccioli being at the same time informed that she must accompany the elder of the two Counts, so as to comply with the condition for her residence under his roof, if she would avoid consignment to a cloister. Together with this intimation the Contessa received intelligence that her husband, still desirous of her society and willing to condone her numerous offences against his honour, had gone to Rome for the purpose of moving the authorities to command her to retire forthwith to a convent *or* return at once to his embrace. That the object of this intelligence was to dispose the lady for immediate flight, at which the Government meant to connive, may be inferred from the official complaisance that at the same moment provided her with a passport for crossing the Papal frontier. The intelligence and the passport came to the lady, whilst she was again staying at the villa, which had been her home in the summer and autumn of the previous

year. Seizing pen and paper the Contessa, who could not venture to go herself to Ravenna, wrote a hasty letter to her lover and despatched it by a special courier to the Palazzo Guiccioli. 'This alone,' she wrote in her mother-tongue, after giving him some of the particulars of her position, 'was wanting to fill up the measure of my despair. Help me, my dear Byron, for I am in a situation most terrible; and without you, I can resolve on nothing . . . has just been with me, having been sent by . . . to tell me that I must depart from Ravenna before next Tuesday, as my husband has had recourse to Rome, for the purpose of either forcing me to return to him, or else putting me in a convent; and the answer from thence is expected in a few days. I must not speak of this to anyone,—I must escape by night; for, if my project should be discovered, it will be impeded, and my passport (which the goodness of heaven has permitted me, I know not how, to obtain) will be taken from me. Byron! I am in despair!—If I must leave you here without knowing when I shall see you again, if it is your will that I should suffer so cruelly, I am resolved to remain. They may put me in a convent; I shall die,—but—but then you cannot aid me, and I cannot reproach you. I know not what they tell me, for my agitation overwhelms me:—and why? Not because I fear my present danger, but solely, I call heaven to witness, solely because I must leave you.'—Scarcely more eloquent of the writer's passionate attachment to the poet than of broken confidence in his devotion to her, it is the letter of a woman who, wanting her lover's counsel and encouragement in a moment of urgent trouble, and yearning to see the

beauty of his face and hear the music of his voice once again, if only for a few minutes, before going into exile, felt the necessity of writing strenuously in order to make him mount horse and gallop to her side. It is significant of his growing coldness to her, that there was any need to write at all to the poet, who cannot have been unaware that she was likely at any moment to be ordered to quit her native province. Had she not distrusted his loyalty to the woman who had dishonoured herself for his sake, she would have written no more than, 'Come quickly ; I am in trouble.' The suggestion that he might will her to suffer cruelly, the suspicion that he would not be sorry to know she was in a convent, and the hint that death might prevent her from reproaching him, would never have dropt from her pen to the tear-blotted paper, had she been troubled by no doubts of his fidelity.

Playing on the credulity of the simple fellow whom he delighted to 'bam,' and at the same time indulging his propensity for making himself the hero of a romantic story, Byron told poor Tom Medwin how he had smuggled Teresa out of Ravenna, on discovering 'a plot laid with the sanction of the Legate for shutting her up in a convent for life ;' the truth of the matter being that he remained in his luxurious quarters at Ravenna—in the very palace of which she would have remained the mistress, had he not crossed her path—whilst she went her miserable way from her father's country-house to Bologna, and from Bologna to Florence, unattended by her lover, though cheered on the road by occasional letters from his pen.

As for the Legate's plot for immuring the lady, nothing was further from his purpose than to put her

in a convent, when he meant to use her as a decoy for drawing Byron out of the part of Italy, where he had for some time been a very troublesome resident. The touch and trick of petty state-craft, the cunning and artifice of the *chef-de-police*, are apparent in all the successive turns and stages of the rather droll business. So long as the Legate thought it best for the Papal States, if not for the repose of his particular province, that Byron should remain at Ravenna under the observation of a vigilant police, the Gambas were allowed to remain in Romagna, and were even led to hope that they would escape punishment for their complicity in the designs of the Carbonari. Indulgence having been shown them for a few months for reasons of policy, another course was pursued towards the two Counts in the middle of July, when, having by the Contessa's gentle influence disposed Byron to linger contentedly at Ravenna, where for the moment he would be least mischievous to the general cause of order, they were required to withdraw him by the same influence from the city, where his presence by sustaining the spirit of local disaffection was embarrassing, though scarcely dangerous. In the same month two circumstances quickened the Cardinal's desire for the poet's withdrawal from the palace which, with a flagrant abuse of the privileges of hospitality, he had converted into a place of arms and conspiracy, and would have held as a kind of fortress, had the conspirators required it for that purpose. By their petition to the Cardinal, that he would condescend to entreat Byron to remain in Ravenna, the poor of the city determined the Legate to compass the poet's speedy departure from the place, where he had ac-

quired an inconvenient influence over the populace. The recent fray between one of the Papal officers and one of Byron's servants was another reason why the Cardinal wished to be rid of Teresa Guiccioli's admirer. Hence the extrusion of the Gambas from the Papal States, in order that Teresa might be constrained to follow her father into exile, and might draw in her trail the English lord, whose turbulent temper had infected his very menials. The Legate may well have assumed, that to send Teresa into exile would be to send Byron in a trice after her,—that the lover, for whose sake she had sacrificed so much, would follow her train whithersoever she carried it. His Eminence would have been less confident for the success of his stratagem, had he known how Byron regarded the decree of separation, which he docketed in his diary with two other serious misfortunes of the previous year,—an adverse judgment in the Court of Chancery, and a serious pecuniary discomfiture from the perversity of his wife's trustees.

Though his project for getting Byron out of the Papal territory succeeded eventually, His Eminence had cause to murmur at the length of time the poet lingered at the Palazzo Guiccioli after his mistress had taken her departure. Probably because she felt it incumbent on her honour to account for the poet's reluctance to follow her out of Romagna, in a way that was most creditable to his chivalric devotion and steadfastness, Teresa Guiccioli was careful to impress on Moore that the delay was partly due to his affection for Ravenna, partly to his care for the interests of her relations, but chiefly to the fact that, by taking his measures deliberately and moving at a time of his

own manifest choice, he avoided the discredit of being supposed to leave the city at the order of a tyrannical government. Hesitancy in selecting another place of abode, and the constitutional dilatoriness that at all times disinclined him to turn his back on any spot in which he had planted himself, were, no doubt, mainly accountable for the poet's contentment to remain more than three months at Ravenna without Teresa. It cannot however be questioned that he would have set out for Pisa somewhat sooner than the twenty-ninth of October, had his attachment to 'the Lady of the Land' been the same overpowering passion towards the close of 1821 that it was in the summer and autumn of 1819. It points to the same conclusion that August had not closed before Teresa became impatient for her lord's society and so dissatisfied with his excellent reasons for remaining where he was, that she wrote to Shelley (whom she had not yet seen), entreating him not to leave Ravenna without his friend. When this significant prayer came to him from the lady, who would scarcely have made it had she been in no degree distrustful of her power over her proper poet, Shelley was staying at the Palazzo, where he found Byron splendidly lodged,—living within his income of 4000*l.* a-year (albeit with ten horses in his stable), and looking altogether another man from the Lord Byron of Venice, unable to digest food, and consumed with hectic fever. No less surprised than delighted at his host's 'great improvement in every respect—in genius, temper, moral views, health, and happiness,' Shelley was disposed to attribute the change for the better altogether to La Guiccioli, who 'seemed from her letters to be a very



amiable woman.' Two months later, when after forming her personal acquaintance, he had used his opportunities for studying her character during daily intercourse with her, and probably had also learned how little she had to do with her lord's salvation from his Venetian depravity, Shelley took a less cheerful view of the connexion which he had commended much too highly. 'La Guiccioli,' he wrote in October 1821, 'is a very pretty, sentimental, innocent Italian, who has sacrificed an immense fortune for the sake of Lord Byron, and who, if I know anything of my friend, of her, and of human nature, will hereafter have plenty of leisure and opportunity to repent her rashness.'

It has already been told how Allegra was sent to Bagna Cavallo, to the lively indignation of her mother, whose predictions of trouble from the arrangement were justified by the event. On January 23, 1821, when the Barbarians were building their bridge over the Po, and arrangements were being made for immediate war in Romagna, Byron wrote in his diary, 'I am somewhat puzzled what to do with my daughter.' A few weeks later he ended the perplexity by sending the child to the convent, where she died in the following year, after living happily and to the considerable improvement of her temper for something more than twelve months under the gentle discipline of the nuns, who made a pet of the little girl, and seem in everything to have acted well by her. That the Shelleys, differing from Claire on the subject, regarded this disposal of the child as about the best temporary arrangement that could be made for her custody and training at a moment of

disorder and uncertainty, is shown by Byron's letter to Shelley (April 26, 1821) and by the account given of the child's appearance and treatment at the convent, in the recently published passages of Shelley's letters from Ravenna to his wife. 'It is gratifying to me,' Byron wrote to his friend in April, 'that you and Mrs. Shelley do not disapprove of the step which I have taken, which is merely temporary.' Shelley's description of the child's looks and behaviour, when he saw the little girl for about three hours at her convent in August, is the more noteworthy because the favourable report (touched in the more pleasantly out of tenderness for poor Claire, whom it was designed to comfort) is consistent with the less agreeable accounts given of her by Hoppner and Byron himself. With her curling hair falling in beautiful profusion about her neck, and a slight figure whose effect was heightened by singular grace of movement and carriage, Allegra, 'prettily dressed in white muslin and an apron of black silk with trousers,' raced about the convent with the poet, who had often nursed her in her earliest infancy; showed him her little bed, her dinner chair, and the *carrozzina* in which she and her playmates drew one another about in the garden; prattled to him of holy saints and the dear *Bambino*; and made a comical stir throughout the whole college by ringing violently at the big bell, some few minutes before the appointed time for the nuns to leave their beds. 'The tocsin of the convent,' Shelley wrote to his wife, 'sounded, and it required all the efforts of the prioress to prevent the spouses of God from rendering themselves, dressed or undressed, to the accustomed signal. Nobody scolds her for these *scappature*, so I suppose she is well treated as far as

temper is concerned.' There can be no doubt of the kindness with which the little parlour-boarder of the convent was treated by the nuns, who regarded her none the less tenderly because Byron paid them double fees for her entertainment and instruction. But though Byron had determined to have her trained to womanhood in the Catholic faith, it was not his intention that she should remain at Bagna Cavallo till her education was completed. It was only because he could not find a suitable seminary for her near Pisa, that he relinquished his purpose of taking her with him to Tuscany.

Leaving Ravenna early on the twenty-ninth morning of October, Byron met his old school-mate, Lord Clare, on the road between Imola and Bologna,—an interview of five minutes, that 'annihilated for a moment all the years between the present time and the days of Harrow,' and gave the two men a brief renewal of boyish emotion. This casual meeting on the public road was followed soon by the poet's meeting at Bologna, after five years of severance, with Sam Rogers, who wrote in the third of the following years, when news from Missolonghi had darkened most English homes, and filled most English breasts with concern,—

' Much had passed

Since last we parted ; and those five short years—  
Much had they told ! His clustering locks were turn'd  
Grey ; nor did aught recall the youth that swam  
From Sestos to Abydos. Yet his voice,  
Still it was sweet ; still from his eye the thought  
Flash'd lightning-like, nor lingered on the way,  
Waiting for words. Far, far into the night  
We sat, conversing—no unwelcome hour,  
The hour we met ; and, when Aurora rose,  
Rising, we climb'd the rugged Appennine.'

Crossing the Appennines with the poet of 'Italy,' Byron visited the Florence Gallery with the same companion. On the 3rd of November he was writing letters from his new home, —the Palazzo Lanfranchi in the Lung' Arno of Pisa.

With the discretion and justice that characterize his 'Life of Lord Byron' (an enterprise of many difficulties for an English writer, and an especially arduous undertaking for a foreigner), Dr. Karl Elze calls attention to the poet's neglect, during his sojourn at Ravenna, to interest himself in the historical relics and recollections of a city so singularly rich in monuments and memories of some of the most momentous incidents and vicissitudes of human affairs. Whilst the poetry, that flowed from his pen from the beginning of 1820 to the November of the following year, betrays a puzzling indifference to these sources of interest, his letters and journals exhibit the same disregard for the very matters that would certainly have engaged much of his attention had Hobhouse been at his side. But we cannot concur with an excellent biographer in thinking that Byron's life at Ravenna 'was not only regular but monotonous.' When he is at full work, a man of letters necessarily spends most of his days in uneventful routine. He rises from bed to read and write, and when he has wearied himself by writing and reading, he goes again to bed. With brief intervals of relaxation from labour, for meals and needful exercise, this is the ordinary existence of a man of studious pursuits and literary devotion. Days so spent may afford little wherewith to brighten the pages of a diary ; but far from being monotonous,

they may abound in various and vivid excitements. It was so with Byron, who never lived more rapidly and brightly than he did in the little city that to a tourist, without occupation, friends, or the forces by which some few and fortunate persons can make amusement for themselves anywhere, might well appear the tamest and sleepest town of southern Europe. Doubtless in Byron's time its society was narrow and provincial. Doubtless days and weeks passed, of which he had nothing to record save that he had read something, written something, dined in solitude or with a single friend, ridden in the forest, heard some music, and gossiped with Teresa Guiccioli. But excitements were not wanting to the man of adventure who in little more than a year and ten months, acted as *cicisbeo* to a young and lovely countess, caused the lady to separate violently from her husband, made his love of her the talk of all Italy, and filling his house with political conspirators constituted himself the 'local Head Centre' (as the Fenians would say) of a revolutionary movement, that did not fail without bringing a large Austrian army into the field for its destruction. Still less is it to be supposed that vivid emotions were unknown to the poet who, in the midst of these distractions and during so short a period, wrote 'The Doge of Venice,' 'Sardanapalus,' the 'Two Foscari,' 'Cain,' and 'Heaven and Earth'; began 'Werner' and 'The Deformed Transformed'; and whilst producing this remarkable series of dramatic works found leisure also to produce the fifth Canto of 'Don Juan,' the 'Prophecy of Dante' and the 'Vision of Judgment,' besides translating the episode of Francesca of Rimini

from Dante's 'Inferno' and the 'Morgante Maggiore' of Pulci. Conceive the activity and agitations of the mind that was pouring upon mankind such a strong stream of stirring and various thought. To speak of monotony in connexion with such a mind, during the period of its greatest activity and exuberance, is to provoke a smile. The sum of the work, its vigour, profuseness, and diversity are so marvellous even to incredibility, that sceptics will arise to declare it absolutely impossible for single unaided brain to have yielded so much literature of extraordinary excellence on so many different subjects in so brief a term, when it was also stirred in separate fields of action by the excitements of love, conspiracy, and ambition. To account for an industry so incessant and astoundingly prolific under circumstances so unfavourable to meditation and creative effort, the reader must bear in mind Byron's remarkable faculty of withdrawing his intellectual powers from matters that were occasioning him the most intense excitement. All through the earliest period of his domestic troubles, from the commencement of the quarrel with Lady Byron to the final act of separation, he occupied himself with literary labour. At Ravenna he had his pen in his hand all through the excitements coming to him for Teresa's suit for a decree of separation from her husband, and was surprised he could not settle to his work of turning-off verses, in the few days when he was expecting war to break out at any moment in Romagna. 'For several days,' he wrote in his diary on January 31, 1821, 'I have not written anything except a few answers to letters. In momentary expectation of an explosion of some kind, it is not

easy to settle down to the desk for the higher kinds of composition. I could do it, to be sure, for, last summer, I wrote my drama in the very bustle of Madame la Contessa G——'s divorce and all its process of accompaniments. At the same time, I also had the news of the loss of an important law-suit in England. But these were only private and personal business; the present is of a different nature.'

Though the regular industry, temperance in diet, and comparatively wholesome excitements of his life at Ravenna had resulted in a great improvement of his health, it may not be inferred from Shelley's flattering view of his friend's condition, that Byron had recovered all the constitutional stamina, which he had squandered so recklessly at Venice. More than once he suffered at Ravenna from violent attacks of the old indigestion. Though better and much more under his command, his temper was still liable to exacerbations and outbreaks of fury, that were chiefly referable to disease of body. One of the concluding incidents of his sojourn in the Romagna was the slight attack in October of malarial fever (yet another attack of the insidious enemy that had its final triumph at Missolonghi). Nor may it be inferred from what has been said of his better habits that Byron (though 'becoming,' to use Shelley's words, 'what he should be, a virtuous man,') had completely weaned himself from the vicious practices that were the chief cause of his reputation for libertinism. It is dismally significant of his sense of inability to withhold himself from a particular form of sensuality, that he entreated Shelley to stay longer

at Ravenna, to save him in the Guiccioli's absence from falling back into his evil mode of life. Other and direct evidence of the same moral instability may be found in the letter he wrote Moore on the 1st of October. He still took laudanum at least so often and freely, that the practice of taking it must still be regarded as one of the several conditions prejudicial to his health. In January 1821, he wrote in his diary, 'Took a glass of grog, after having ridden hard in rainy weather, and scribbled, and scribbled again, the spirits (at least mine) need a little exhilaration, *and I don't like laudanum now as I used to do*:'—a note indicating pernicious familiarity with the poison. Touching his experience of the same preparation of the narcotic drug he writes on October 6, 1821, to Moore, 'Laudanum has a similar effect; but I can take much of it without any effect at all.' He still used aperient medicine, not only to preserve himself from fatness and correct the old morbid disposition to obesity, but for the sake of the excitation coming to the brain from the irritation of the lining membrane of the stomach. 'The thing,' he writes to Moore in the letter just quoted, 'that gives me the highest spirits (it seems absurd) is a dose of salts—I mean in the afternoon, after their effect. But one can't take them like champagne.' It follows that the poet's restoration of health was far from perfect. On no system of treatment could his health have been altogether regained; and the system he pursued in this season of comparative virtue was in many respects hurtful to the physical forces. Having carried to Ravenna an irreparably shaken constitution, he went to Pisa with the shattered constitution somewhat amended.



## CHAPTER V.

## PISA.

Byron's Friends at Pisa and Genoa—Their Views of and Books about Him—His Appearance, Costume, and Habits—Letter from Mr. Sheppard of Frome—The Poet relents towards his Wife—Lady Noel's Death—Byron's consequent Enrichment—Allegra's Death—The Pistol Club—The Affair with the Trooper—The Fracas at Montenero—Difficulties with the Government—Shelley's Death—The Hunts in Italy—Leigh Hunt's Disappointment and Byron's Annoyance—Migration to Genoa.

WHEN he crossed the peninsula from Ravenna to Pisa, with seven servants, five carriages, nine horses, a bulldog, a mastiff, two cats, and a lot of poultry (a description of the poet's travelling train given by Medwin, whose accuracy in certain details of the matter was impugned by Fletcher), Byron was within two years and eight months of his death. On entering the marble halls and climbing the marble staircase of the Casa Lanfranchi in the Lung'Arno of Pisa, the palace of haunted chambers whose ghosts outnumbered his liveried retainers, the poet was within a year and nine months of his departure from Italy for the Isles of Greece. Of this concluding term of his long sojourn in Italy, the first eleven months were spent at Pisa (with the exception of the few weeks of the summer of 1822, which he passed in villegiatura at Montenero, a suburb of Leghorn). During the remainder of the period Byron had for his abode the Villa Saluzzo, in Albaro, just outside Genoa.

Of Byron's appearance, state of health, temper, and way of living at Pisa, Montenero, and Genoa, there are sources of abundant information; for at all three places he lived under the observation of some one or more than one of a group of persons, who studying him attentively to the best of their lights wrote of him freely in letters and memoirs, that have long been in the world's hands;—Tom Medwin (the perplexing simpleton), the Shelleys (nicely observant and generously critical), Leigh Hunt (hypochondriacal and bilious), Trelawny (the well-set gentleman of the world, alternately shrewd and sympathetic), the Williamses (amiable but superficial), West (the American painter, keen and kindly after the manner of Americans), Lady Blessington (the frivolous 'beauty' of sentiment and fashion), and Teresa Guiccioli, who, abundantly communicative about the poet to Moore, lived to be voluminously garrulous about her 'Bairon' in her prosperous old age. The difficulty, however, of dealing with the evidence of such a multitude of witnesses is not great because there is no reason to question the sincerity of anyone of them, with the single exception of Teresa Guiccioli,—whose thoroughly feminine and rather pleasant vanity made her ambitious of figuring in history as Byron's 'preserving angel,' and disposed her to rearrange and colour matters into accordance with so flattering a view of her relation and importance to the poet.

With the exception of the Shelleys and Teresa Guiccioli, none of these persons knew much of the man, whose greatness endowed his mere acquaintances with interest and celebrity. Medwin (whilom an officer of the 24th Light Dragoons, and author of

‘Ahasuerus the Wanderer’) was so foolish a creature that he would not have known Byron. had he lived sociably with the poet for twenty years instead of a few months, and had the poet throughout the whole time condescended to treat him seriously, instead of regarding him as an amiable absurdity. Leigh Hunt knew little of Byron in London; and in Italy he was so worn with hypochondria, and stung with paltry annoyances, and fretted by sordid grievances and mean vexations, as to be incapable of seeing anything but the worst side and pettiest weaknesses of the disdainful and niggardly patron, who was by the way at great pains to make the peevish and bankrupt *littérateur* think ill of him. Lady Blessington’s opportunities for knowing the poet were only those which he afforded her, when he came to her Genoese *salon* (sometimes with a copy of verses for her in his hand) to gossip sentimentally with her about his domestic troubles, and to show her that Lady Caroline Lamb’s darling poet still knew how to humour a woman of wit and fashion. West’s opportunities for studying the poet at Montenero and Pisa were merely those of a young portrait-painter, so fortunate as to get ‘sittings’ from the man of world-covering fame;—and the young artist made the most of them.

A far superior person to Tom Medwin (the well-mannered noodle), and Taaffe (the Irish blockhead, for whose precious commentary on the ‘*Divina Commedia*’ Byron exerted himself to find a publisher, before the commentator’s bad horsemanship put his patron in conflict with the Tuscan Government), Edward John Trelawny, no doubt, was for a brief while on terms of familiarity with Byron, and, studying the poet

within certain lines to good purpose, produced a valuable and not ungenerous portraiture of him. Well born and well bred, tall and athletic, a man of strong eyes, beetling brows, fine aquiline profile, and heavy dark moustache, Trelawny had the air of distinction and the show of adventurous capacity, that never failed to command the respect of the poet who rated men of action much higher than bookworms and men of the desk. To Byron this gentleman of the world was, also, none the less respectable for the gifts of fortune, greatly exceeding the ordinary means of younger sons, which enabled him to keep good horses and play the part of a gentleman-at-large in a dignified manner. But though he liked him and even honoured him for his manifest courage and stalwart manliness, Byron never showed Trelawny the finer and higher forces of his intellect and nature. Companions in swimming and riding, competitors at pistol-practice and fellow-voyagers (on excellent terms) from Genoa to Argostoli, they were mere men of the world and society to one another. 'His conversation,' Trelawny says of his friend, 'was anything but literary except when Shelley was present.' Instead of talking poetry to the man of Cornish breed, Byron entertained him with anecdotes of great actors on and off the stage, boxers, gamblers, duellists, drunkards; garnishing the gossip with the 'towny' slang and flippancies, that were the fashion in London when 'Childe Harold' was new literature, and the betting was even whether or no Miss Milbanke would become Lady Byron. Regarding poets and their doings very much as Colonel Newcome regarded them, Trelawny was not a person to whom Byron could have talked

about his art. Moreover, though they were thrown together under circumstances that speedily change casual acquaintances to intimate friends, the two men were together for no more than fourteen of the thirty months that intervened between Byron's coming to Pisa and his death at Missolonghi.

Having rendered himself famous from his early manhood by being in at the successive deaths of the two greatest poets of the nineteenth century, during a brief term of foreign touring, it is not wonderful that Trelawny, in his old age, having no stronger claims to social consideration, made the most he honestly could of the period during which he had known Byron and Shelley, and of the friendship they felt for him. 'I knew Shelley the last year of his life, and Byron the last three years of his life. I was on the most intimate terms with both, and saw them almost every day,' Trelawny wrote in March 1878,—using words that have caused persons to infer that he was in almost daily intercourse with the one poet *for* an entire year, and with the other *for* three full years. Making the acquaintance of both poets after his coming to Pisa at the beginning of 1822, he saw much of Shelley from the commencement of their intercourse to the day of the poet's death (July 8, 1822),—in all for a period of six months and two or three days. Introduced to Byron at the beginning of January 1822, Trelawny lived on familiar terms with him till the beginning of January 1823,—the month of his departure for Rome. From that time he saw no more of the poet till the following summer, when he accompanied him from Genoa to Cephalonia, being one of the party that visited Ithaca, soon after which excursion of pleasure he bade

Byron farewell at Argostoli at the end of August or on an early day of September. After parting from Byron at Cephalonia, Trelawny never again saw the poet alive. On hearing of his friend's peril from extreme illness, the adventurous gentleman hastened from Athens to Missolonghi, arriving there in time to make the famous *post-mortem* examination of the feet, that, discovering the nature of the poet's grievous infirmity, made an important contribution to the materials for the explanation of much that was most perplexing in his story. Hence it appears that Byron was within two years and four months of his death when he first took Trelawny by hand; that in 1823 Trelawny lived with the poet for no more than two months; that they never spoke to one another by word of mouth after the opening of September 1823; and that the two periods of their personal association did not together exceed a year and two months.

Of Byron's personal appearance and usual costume several particulars, for the assistance of readers who would see the poet even as he was seen of men during his stay at Pisa and Genoa, may be found in Medwin's 'Conversations,' Lady Blessington's 'Conversations,' Trelawny's 'Records,' and Hunt's spiteful but (allowance being made at every turn of the leaf for the author's jaundice) reliable record of Byronic pettinesses. Finding him much older and much thicker in the neck than Thorwaldsen's bust represents him, and altogether different from the portraits of him by the various engravers, Medwin was surprised to see in the most celebrated of living poets 'a man about five feet seven or eight, apparently forty years of age,' who resembled Milton

in that 'he barely escaped being short and thick.' The greyness and thinness of the poet's tresses were also noticed by the same chronicler of Byronic small-beer, who, after alluding to the pallor and wanness of the great man's complexion, observes that 'his hair, thin and fine, had almost become grey, and waved in natural and graceful curls over his head, that was assimilating itself fast to the "bald first Cæsar's."'

Allowing the auburn-grey tresses (which curled with something of their old feathery lightness about the brow and temples) to grow at the nape of his neck to a notable length, Byron at the same time wore moustaches, 'which were not sufficiently dark to be becoming.'—Trelawny has much to say in commendation of the poet's personal aspect, which 'realised that ideal standard with which imagination adorns genius.' But whilst speaking with admiration of 'his small highly-finished head and curly hair,' which 'had an airy and graceful appearance from the massiveness and length of his throat,' and no less admiringly of 'his eyes and lips' which revealed genius to everyone who studied them, Trelawny (a good opinion on questions of masculine style) observes of the poet, 'His long absence had not effaced the mark John Bull brands his children with ; the instant he loomed above the horizon, on foot or horseback, you saw at a glance he was a Britisher.'—A Britisher, however, of outlandish garb and details. When Leigh Hunt, after a wearying walk through hot and dusty suburbs from Leghorn to Montenero, came face to face with the peer who had dined with him years syne in Horsemonger Lane Gaol, he was slow to recognise the author of 'Childe Harold' in a fat gentleman, 'dressed

in a loose nankin jacket and white trousers, his neck-cloth open, and his hair in thin ringlets about his throat: altogether presenting a very different aspect from the compact, energetic, and curly-headed person, he had known in England. Half-an-hour later, on going forth from his hot salmon-coloured villa in the fierce sun, Byron had donned a 'loose riding-coat of mazarin blue, and a velvet cap, looking more lordly than before, but hardly less foreign.' The nankeen jacket, mazarin blue riding-coat (mentioned by Hunt), and the braided tartan (Gordon pattern) jacket, to which reference is made by Medwin and Trelawny, were favourite articles of dress with the poet, who retaining his old taste for 'white duck' trousers, was also a frequent wearer in hot weather of nankeen trousers, made loose and strapped down so as to cover the feet. The velvet cap, noticed by Hunt, Trelawny and Lady Blessington, was fitted with a broad gold band and a rich gold tassel. Except on very hot days, when he still exposed his throat to full view and free air, his practice at this period of his story was to surround his neck with a light neck-cloth, a narrow black stock, or some other easily adapted and comfortable cravat. To guard his eyes from glaring sun-light, which sometimes made him suffer from ophthalmia, he sometimes wore the blue spectacles, that appear in a description of the poet by Lady Blessington, who had occasion to observe that his green tartan and nankeen jackets, profusely decorated with braid and buttons, were of an antiquated fashion,—'the waist very short, the back very narrow, and the sleeves set in as they used to be ten or fifteen years before.' The maker of these



precise and feminine observations was of opinion that her visitor's nankeen clothing had shrunk from washing.—The lady and Trelawny concur in their testimony respecting the housings of the poet's saddle-horses. 'At the outer door,' says Trelawny, as good a rider and judge of horseflesh as ever came out of England, 'we found three or four very ordinary-looking horses; they had holsters on the saddles, and many other superfluous trappings, such as the Italians delight in and Englishmen eschew. Shelley, and an Irish visitor just announced, mounted two of these sorry jades. I luckily had my own cattle.' Lady Blessington says, 'His horse was literally covered with various trappings; the saddle was *à la hussarde*, with holsters, in which he always carried pistols.' In connexion with what Hunt says of the poet's fatness at Montenero, notice should be taken of what the same authority says of the change Byron soon wrought in his bulk and appearance by physic and starvation. 'He had got fat,' says the spiteful narrator, 'and then went to the other extreme. He came to me one day out of another room, and said with great glee, "Look here! what do you say to this?" at the same time doubling the lapels of his coat one over the other,—three months ago, I could not button it!' It was thus that Byron expanded and diminished in body to the last, now swelling to fatness when he fed with ordinary freedom, and now wasting to an elegant tenuity when he stayed his keen appetite for food with opium and tobacco-juice.

Byron had been about three weeks at Pisa when he received the curious epistle from the Rev. John

Sheppard of Frome, Somerset (dated November 21, 1821), enclosing a copy of the prayer which Mrs. Sheppard (the clergyman's wife) had composed on July 31, 1814, at Hastings, for the poet's conversion.—a prayer recently discovered amongst the papers which passed from the lady to her husband on her death in 1819. That this devout prayer for a person, alike distinguished for his transcendent talents and his neglect of God, was really composed and offered in behalf of Byron, who was staying at Hastings at the time of its composition, there is small reason to doubt. But whilst she prayed with affecting fervour for the poet, Mrs. Sheppard seems to have mistaken some other visitor at Hastings for the object of her pious solicitude, as she more than once spoke to her husband of the poet's 'agility on the rocks at Hastings.' In the gracious note, with which he acknowledged the clergyman's kindness in sending him a paper so likely to cause him emotions of solemn gratitude to the maker of the prayer, the poet observed, 'Though I am *not* quite *sure* that it was intended by the writer for *me*, yet the date, the place where it was written, with some other circumstances that you mention, render the allusion probable. But for whomever it was meant, I have read it with all the pleasure which can arise from so melancholy a topic.' Of one thing, however, Byron must have been quite *sure*,—that he was *not* the climber of rocks, whose agility had attracted the lady's attention.—Interesting for various reasons, this letter is especially noteworthy for its evidence that in 1814, whilst the storm was rising in religious circles throughout the country against the wicked

poet, pious women were falling on their knees and out of their charity to sinners were beseeching God to pardon him.

Four days before the date of Mr. Sheppard's curious epistle, Byron had written a remarkable letter, with the intention of sending it to Lady Byron. Though it was withheld by the writer, and probably never came under Lady Byron's eye during his life, it is necessary to exhibit in these pages an epistle that throws light upon the relations of the separated husband and wife, and especially on his feelings towards her at the commencement of his residence at Pisa.

Communication between Lady Byron and her husband had not altogether ceased since the poet's futile overtures for reconciliation in 1816. Occasions arose when it was necessary for them to ascertain each other's views and wishes on matters of business. But as the requirements of these occasions could be satisfied by correspondence with a third party, the intercourse of the husband and wife on matters of business was usually maintained through the agents employed for the management of their private affairs. At the same time Byron received intelligence of his child (Ada) through Mrs. Leigh, whose letters sometimes contained information that was inspired, if not directly dictated, by her brother's wife. On rare occasions, however, Byron wrote directly to his wife; and at least on one occasion Lady Byron wrote directly to him.

Whilst Byron was lingering at Venice in November 1819, in the state of vacillation so happily described by Hoppner, making preparations for an immediate return to England whilst he awaited intelligence from Ravenna, his mind often busied itself with

a remarkable communication, that offered him a prospect of reconciliation with his wife. The poet's old friend, Mr. Wedderburn Webster (afterwards Sir James Webster Wedderburn) had written him a letter of reasons for thinking that a reunion might be brought about between Ada's parents. What the reasons were does not appear. Whether Mr. Wedderburn Webster wrote of his own mere motion, or at the suggestion of some person acting with or without authority from Lady Byron, does not appear. It is, however, inconceivable that this old and staunch friend to the poet's interests would have stirred in the delicate business without good grounds for a strong opinion that he would stir to good purpose. So confident and urgent was Mr. Wedderburn Webster in the matter, that on receiving an unsatisfactory answer to the letter of reasons, he wrote again to the poet, urging him to seize the opportunity for returning to his wife and his proper place in society. All that is known to the writer of this page about this distressingly suggestive correspondence may be found in Letter 376 of Moore's 'Life,' in which Byron, dating from Ravenna, June 1, 1820, writes to his future biographer these words, — I have received a Parisian letter from W. W., which I prefer answering through you, if that worthy be still in Paris, and, as he says, an occasional visitor of yours. In November last he wrote to me a well-meaning letter, stating, for some reasons of his own, his belief that a remission might be effected between Lady B. and myself. To this I answered as usual; and he sent me a second letter, repeating his notions, which letter I have never answered, having had a thousand other things to think of. He now writes as

if he believed that he had offended me by touching on the topic ; and I wish you to assure him that I am not at all so,—but, on the contrary, obliged by his good nature. At the same time acquaint him *the thing is impossible. You know this*, as well as I.’ A more unfortunate moment for Wedderburn Webster’s third letter could not have been chosen, than the season when Byron was in the full bustle of Teresa Guiccioli’s suit for separation from her husband,—respecting which matter Byron is copiously communicative in the remainder of his letter to Moore. It should be observed that Mr. Wedderburn Webster was no mere busybody, and that Byron (given to free speech about his friends, when they gave him unpalatable counsel) does not suggest that the gentleman was pushing himself into a quarrel of which he could not know the truth on both sides. The fair inference is that in November 1819, when he was almost as strongly disposed to go to England as to Ravenna, Byron saw a fair opening to a reconciliation with his wife, and that Teresa Guiccioli was the evil influence who lured him from the course that might have restored him to his wife’s affections and to English society. This is matter for consideration to those who, taking Teresa at her own valuation on Moore’s letters of credence, have extolled her as the generous creature who, with sublime disregard for her own interests, sacrificed herself to save Byron.

Having given Moore the ‘Memoirs’ in October 1819, and appointed him the biographer of the Memorialist, Byron with no more than proper consideration for his wife’s feelings and reputation wrote to her on January 1, 1820, offering to submit to her perusal

the autobiographic narrative, in order that it should be relieved through her suggestions of any faults of inaccuracy or unfairness to her, of which he had been guilty. To this epistle, Lady Byron writing straight to her husband made this answer,—

*‘Kirkby Mallory, March 10, 1820.*

‘I received your letter of January, offering to my perusal a Memoir of part of your life. I decline to inspect it. I consider the publication or circulation of such a composition at any time as prejudicial to Ada’s future happiness. For my own sake, I have no reason to shrink from publication ; but, notwithstanding the injuries which I have suffered, I should lament some of the *consequences*.

‘A. BYRON.’

To which letter Byron after a day’s consideration made the following reply :—

*‘Ravenna, April 3, 1820.*

‘I received yesterday your answer, dated March 10. My offer was an honest one, and surely could only be construed as such even by the most malignant casuistry. I could answer you, but it is too late, and it is not worth while. To the mysterious menace of the last sentence, whatever its import may be—and I cannot pretend to unriddle it—I could hardly be very sensible even if I understood it, as, before it can take place, I shall be where “nothing can touch him further.” . . . I advise you, however, to anticipate the period of your intention, for, be assured, no power of figures will avail beyond the present ; and if it could, I would answer with the Florentine,

“ Ed io, che posto son con loro in croce  
 . . . . . e certo  
 La fiera moglie, più ch' altro, mi nuoce.”

Each of these letters is deficient in perspicuity towards the end ; the epistle from Lady Byron affording the larger field for conjecture. She may have only meant, by the concluding clause of her last sentence, that although her sufferings had rendered her callous to affliction and comparatively indifferent to fresh annoyances, she should regret the consequences of the threatened publication on her child's character and happiness. She may, however, have intended to intimate that, if his version of the story of their differences should be published, she would publish her version of them, from the commencement of his ill-treatment of her to his liaison with Jane Clermont, and that, notwithstanding her large grounds for resentment, she should be sorry to do his character so considerable an injury. Byron, who had formerly suspected her of nursing a purpose to vindicate herself at his expense after his death, seems to have put this interpretation on her words. It was a part of Mrs. Beecher Stowe's indiscretion to insist that Lady Byron had suffered wrong which certainly was never committed, and that the contingent menace of her letter was to publish to her husband's infamy the morbid fancy, that did not enter her troubled mind, till years had passed slowly over his grave. But of Mrs. Stowe and her book of blunders, the less said the better.

Though he had small reason to expect that his letter of January 1, 1820, would draw a conciliatory

reply from his wife, Byron was not without excuse for annoyance at the temper and tone of her answer. The chagrin her note occasioned him was not diminished by his vexation at the refusal of her Trustees to lend the money on mortgage to Lord Blessington. More than once during his sojourn at Ravenna he spoke and wrote of his wife resentfully,—albeit with an anger less scorching than his previous outbreaks of rage against her. On December 10, 1820, in his fury at reading in a newspaper of her consent to be a patroness of a Charity Ball, he threw off the set of verses, opening with,

‘ What matter the pangs of a husband and father,  
 If his sorrows in exile be great or be small,  
 So the Pharisee’s glories around her she gather,  
 And the Saint patronises her “Charity Ball.”

‘ What matters—a heart, which though faulty was feeling,  
 Be driven to excesses which once would appal—  
 That the Sinner would suffer is only fair dealing,  
 As the Saint keeps her charity back for “the Ball.” ’

Withholding these intemperate verses from the press, Byron also kept back the peevish letter he wrote for his wife’s eye on the 1st of March, 1821, touching the insecurity of English funds and the injury done him by her Trustees. Dated from Ravenna, the letter of scant courtesy and much vehement rudeness begins,

‘ I have received your message, through my sister’s letter, about English security, &c., &c. It is considerate (and true, even) that such is to be found—but not that I shall find it. Mr. ——— for his own views and purposes will thwart all such attempts till he has accomplished his own’ (? end), ‘ viz. to make me lend my fortune to some client of his choosing : ’



—words chiefly noteworthy for their evidence of the way in which Lady Byron sometimes used Augusta's pen as a means of communication with her husband. Whilst the letter shows how Byron could still explode in gusty pettishness about or to his wife, the fact that he withheld the epistle indicates his growing disinclination to do anything to revive her waning resentment, and diminish his chances of eventually returning to her favour.

Valuable alike for its evidence of a relenting disposition in Lady Byron, and for its testimony to the writer's growing desire for a friendlier understanding and even perfect reconciliation with his wife, is the following withheld epistle which he intended to send her, under cover to Mrs. Leigh,—the letter to which reference was made on a previous page, as having been written four days before the date of Mr. Sheppard's epistle from Frome, Somerset,—

*‘Pisa, November 17. 1821.*

‘I have to acknowledge the receipt of “Ada's hair,” which is very soft and pretty, and nearly as dark already as mine was at twelve years old, if I may judge from what I recollect of some in Augusta's possession, taken at that age. But it don't curl,—perhaps from its being let grow.

‘I also thank you for the inscription of the date and name, and I will tell you why ;—I believe that they are the only two or three words of your handwriting in my possession. For your letters I returned, and except the two words, or rather the one word “Household,” written twice in an old account book, I have no other. I burnt your last note, for

two reasons :—firstly, it was written in a style not very agreeable ; and, secondly, I wished to take your word without documents, which are the worldly resources of suspicious people.

‘ I suppose that this note will reach you somewhere about Ada’s birthday—the 10th December, I believe. She will then be six, so that in about twelve more I shall have some chance of meeting her ;—perhaps sooner, if I am obliged to go to England by business or otherwise. Recollect, however, one thing, either in distance or nearness :—every day which keeps us asunder should, after so long a period, rather soften our mutual feelings, which must always have one rallying point as long as our child exists, which I presume we both hope will be long after either of her parents.

‘ The time which has elapsed since the separation has been considerable, more than the whole brief period of our union, and the not much longer one of our prior acquaintance. We both made a bitter mistake ; but now it is over, and irrevocably so. For, at thirty-three on my part, and a few years less on yours, though it is no very extended period of life, still it is one when the habits and thought are generally so formed as to admit of no modification ; and as we could not agree when younger, we should with difficulty do so now.

‘ I say all this, because I own to you, that, notwithstanding everything, I considered our reunion as not impossible for more than a year after the separation :—but I then gave up the hope entirely and for ever. But this very impossibility of reunion seems to me a reason why, on all the few points of discus-

sion which can arise between us, we should preserve the courtesies of life, and as much of its kindness as people who are never to meet may preserve perhaps more easily than nearer connexions. For my own part, I am violent, but not malignant; for only fresh provocations can awaken my resentments. To you, who are colder and more concentrated, I would just hint, that you may sometimes mistake the depth of cold anger for dignity, and a worse feeling for duty. I assure you that I bear you *now* (whatever I may have done) no resentment whatever. Remember, that *if you have injured me* in aught, this forgiveness is something; and that if I have *injured you*, it is something more still, if it be true, as the moralists say, that the most offending are the least forgiving.

‘Whether the offence has been solely on my side, or reciprocal, or on yours chiefly, I have ceased to reflect on any but two things—viz. that you are the mother of my child, and that we shall never meet again. I think if you also consider the two corresponding points with reference to myself, it will be better for all three.

‘Yours ever,

‘NOEL BYRON.’

Byron's reasons for withholding this carefully composed letter are obvious. Whilst certain of its most incisive sentences would of themselves defeat his purpose, its tone throughout was little calculated to further the object he had in view. His purpose was to win the slightly relenting woman into such a correspondence with him as might result in a friendly arrangement of their differences, if not in a renewal

of domestic association. Working for this end he did well to forbear from asking too much of her returning benignity, and did ill in asserting so precisely that it was not to be conceived they could ever meet again as friends. On reconsideration he must have felt that his wife's resentment would be stirred by the suggestion that she had been as much to blame as he. Lady Byron was the very woman to rise in war against the hint—a sufficiently plain ‘hint,’ it must be admitted—that she was less conscientious than vindictive, less swayed by proper care for her dignity than by the impulses of a cold anger. It is not wonderful that he refrained from posting a letter so certain to incense the woman he wished to appease. On the other hand, when he wished to show her precisely how he felt to his wife, it was natural for him to show Lady Blessington so honest a picture of his feelings. The theorists, who insist that the letter was written only to be shown to his own advantage and Lady Byron's corresponding disadvantage, overlook the fact that, instead of placing the writer in a favourable light and making him figure as a man of an amiable and forgiving disposition, the epistle shows him wanting in generous placability and abounding in some of the qualities that are most likely to engender contention between man and wife. The document is most interesting and valuable as a sincere expression of the feelings of the man who, much though he yearned for reconciliation and the social advantages that would attend it, was still too much heated by the embers of smouldering resentments, to be capable of taking the right measures for the attainment of his desire. The epistle is also very interesting for its evidence of Lady

Byron's disposition towards her husband. She had sent him a lock of their child's hair; with her own hand she had written the date, to remind him of the time when

‘The child of love,—though born in bitterness,  
And nurtured in convulsion,’

had come to them. The mother who did this thing was on the way to become the wife who would invite her husband to return to her for their child's sake.—ay, and for her own sake.

All the biographers give the same account of Byron's life at Pisa, which resembling his life at Ravenna in the hours of rising and going to rest, the hours for light meals and strenuous labour with the pen, the time allotted to horse-exercise, pistol-practice, and Teresa's society, differed from it chiefly in the substitution of the milder excitement of social intercourse with his small circle of English friends for the fierce agitations of political conspiracy. In some respects (indeed in every respect, with the exception of his studious and literary pursuits) it was a loitering, indolent life. Trelawny was justified in speaking of the ‘lazy, dawdling habits’ that distinguished the poet's way of living wherever he tarried, notwithstanding his industry at the desk, and the marvellous fertility of his pen. Seldom leaving his bed before noon, he breakfasted after a careful toilet, if a single cup of very strong green tea—drunk from the medium-sized breakfast-cup in the possession of Dr. Diamond of Twickenham House, Twickenham,—may be called a breakfast. He usually stood, whilst taking the tea, which was served for him without sugar or milk. Sometimes an egg was beaten into

the tea, in the manner of ‘a flip;’ and sometimes he ate the yolk of an egg raw; but it was more usual for the refreshment to consist solely of the unsweetened drink. At two o’clock in the wintry seasons, at three o’clock when the days were long, he lunched off biscuit and soda-water. At three o’clock or four o’clock, after playing a game or two of billiards (playing it unscientifically and almost at random), with any friend or friends who came to spend the afternoon with him, he entered his carriage and drove to the spot outside the town where his riding-horses awaited him. In the saddle he ‘sauntered along the road’ (Trelawny’s expression), with his mounted friends about him,—making leisurely way, in the earlier months of his sojourn at Pisa, to the Cascine and the pine-forests stretching towards the sea; in the later months of the period, to the farm-house (several miles outside the town) where he and his friends spent half-an-hour in pistol-practice at a target, placed in the garden of the Podere for their convenience. Expert (notwithstanding the unsteadiness of his nervous hand) at a sport, that had been a favourite pastime with him from his boyhood, he showed a boyish delight, whenever he made an unusually good shot. On the other hand, when he made a bad shot, or still worse was distinctly surpassed by a competitor, he evinced his mortification, like a vain woman who has been beaten at chess by a player of her own sex. One of the attractions to this farm-house was the handsome daughter of the establishment,—the brunette beauty, with whom the poet used to gossip with piquant freedom, and of whose charms Teresa Guiccioli heard with an uneasiness she had neither

the good sense nor sense of dignity to conceal. The men who attended Byron on these visits to the brunette bower were the members of his Pistol Club, whom (with sublime indifference for 'the inflammation of his weekly bills') he used to entertain at the dinner-parties (for a while, as often as once a-week), when he had for his guests—Shelley, Medwin, Trelawny, Taaffe, Williams, and the two Gambas (father and son). The horse-exercise and pistol-practice of the afternoon were succeeded on ordinary days at seven o'clock by the solitary and meagre meal, at which the poet sometimes for days together took nothing but vegetables. At nine o'clock he visited Count Gamba's household; after which he returned to the Palazzo Lanfranchi, to work at 'Don Juan' or read till two or three o'clock in the morning, when he went (says Trelawny) 'to bed, often feverish, restless, and exhausted—to dream, as he said, more than to sleep.' One of the few slips of a good book, that contains so few mistakes, may be found on the page where Dr. Elze says that from the commencement of the poet's residence at Pisa, Teresa Guiccioli lived with him again under the same roof. At the Villa Rossa of Montenero, where her father was also a visitor, she resided in the same house with the poet; and she stayed for a brief while at the Palazzo Lanfranchi after her father and brother had been expelled from Tuscany; but her open and avowed domiciliation with Byron, after her separation from her husband, began at Albaro, outside Genoa.

Byron was still in the fourth month of his residence at Pisa, when Lady Noel died in England,—an event that, by removing the person whom the

poet regarded as the chief cause of his separation from Lady Byron and the chief obstacle to their reunion, must have encouraged those hopes of eventual reconciliation to his wife, which (notwithstanding his countless assertions to the contrary) were never utterly extinguished in his breast. Liberated from the domination of her mother's imperious will, Lady Byron would now feel the need of her husband's society and protecting care, and at the same time encounter no opposition to her growing tenderness. The wife, who a few months since had sent him the lock of their child's hair, would now soon invite the child's father to return and lay his hand on the head, from which the hair was cut. There is no direct evidence of words that Byron entertained this hope ; but that he took this view of the position is a fair inference from certain facts. That Sir Ralph Noel (Milbanke) was still alive would not militate against this hope within the breast of the poet, who was probably unaware how urgent the baronet had been for the separation, and had contrived to persuade himself that his father-in-law was at heart on his side of the quarrel in 1816.—The Wentworth property having devolved on Lady Byron and her husband at Lady Noel's death, Byron lost no time in appointing Sir Francis Burdett to act as his referee and arbitrator for the apportionment between himself and his wife, of the revenue from the estate, 'estimated at 7000*l.* a-year.' At the same time, he instructed his lawyers to obtain the royal license for his assumption of 'the name and arms, which' (as he writes to Moore on February 28, 1822) 'it seems I am to endue.' Referring to the clerical outcry against 'Cain,' he had



written to his future biographer on the 19th of February, 1822, ‘There is (if I am not mistaken) some good Church preferment on the Wentworth estates ; and I will show them what a good Christian I am, by patronising and preferring the most pious of their order, should opportunity occur.’ Thus it was that, within two years and two months of his death, George Gordon Byron became George Gordon Noel Byron, and henceforth signed his letters with the initials N.B.—the initial letters (as he remarked) of Napoleon-Buonaparte and Nota-Bene. It has already been remarked that he was under no obligation of honour to decline taking his share of the yearly revenue of the property, for which he had paid a heavy price in money, dishonour, and discomfort. It is strange that whilst so many voices have condemned Byron for taking the pecuniary benefit coming to him from his wife’s estate—a benefit that he enjoyed for only two years—no one has ever suggested that Lady Byron should have declined the enrichment that came to her from his marriage-settlement on her, for more than thirty-five years.

One has not far to seek for Byron’s reason for taking the income. The money was his ; he liked money ; therefore he took the money that was his by bargain and purchase, and no more pertained to his wife morally or legally, than that portion of his interest in his own inheritance, which he had assigned to trustees for her advantage, remained either morally or legally in him. It would have been strange had he done otherwise, when he had been for years working and hoarding to get together enough money for the realisation of one or another of his dreams of

material advantage,—the acquisition of an island in the Levant, or a big sweep of land in South America, with two or three good silver mines, to repay him the usance of his moneys. ‘I want,’ he said to Trelawny, ‘a sum of money independent of income, 30,000*l.* will do—10,000*l.* I have—to buy a principality in one of the South American States—Chili or Peru. Lady Hester Stanhope’s way of life in Syria would just suit my humour.’ The money from the Wentworth property might help to compass one or another of these projects. It would have strengthened his hands for an ambitious game in Greece, had events favoured the personal ambition that carried him thither. Moreover, nursing the hope of eventual reconciliation to his wife, whilst he was in no humour to abate, he saw the imprudence of foregoing, aught of the rights and privileges of his marital position, which he had not relinquished by the deed of separation.

Lady Noel’s death was followed, after an interval of something more than two months, by the death of Allegra, under circumstances already set forth ;—an event that must have touched Byron the more acutely, because the child was sent to the convent, where she caught the fatal fever, in contemptuous disregard of Claire’s feelings and vehement protestations. On recovering from the first shock of his grief for the loss of the child, he said to Teresa Guiccioli, ‘She is more fortunate than we are ; besides, her position in the world would scarcely have allowed her to be happy. It is God’s will—let us mention it no more.’ His sorrow for the child does not, however, seem to have been attended with

compassion or any revival of tenderness for the child's mother. To Claire he appears to have been unrelenting to the last. Though he was compelled to acquit Shelley of the immorality referred to in a previous chapter, he seems to have remained under the impression that Jane Clermont had given birth to a second child. Writing from Pisa on December 10, 1821, to Murray, he said, '*My mother, my wife, my daughter, my half-sister, my sister's mother, my natural daughter* (as far at least as I am concerned), and *myself*, are all *only children*.' He would scarcely have inserted the parenthetical words after the reference to his natural daughter, had he thought Allegra her mother's only child. He certainly would not have inserted them had he believed Jane Clermont incapable of erring with another man, even as she had erred with him. This unfavourable opinion of Claire is not to be lost sight of, when Byron is judged for his neglect of the mother at the time of the child's death, and his omission to make any provision in his will for the needy woman whom he had injured grievously.

Partly through misadventure, but chiefly from his want of proper consideration for the sensibilities and difficulties of the government under whose protection he was living, Byron found himself in an irritating embroilment with the Tuscan authorities, at the very moment of his keenest anxiety and sorrow for Allegra. On the 24th of March, 1822, he was returning to the town on horseback, with several mounted members of his Pistol Club about him, and in his rear a carriage containing Teresa Guiccioli and Mrs. Shelley, when a serjeant-major (or corporal, according to another ac-

count) of dragoons rode roughly through the cavalcade, to the discomfiture of Taafe, the Irish bore and absurd commentator, whose horse shying abruptly out of the dragoon's way nearly unseated a very *maladroit* equestrian. To divert attention from his bad riding the Irishman, who had lost his temper and stirrup at the same moment, exclaimed to Byron, 'Shall we endure this man's insolence?' Instead of replying, like a humourist, that he was thankful for the *contre-temps* which had afforded him so good an example of his companion's horsemanship, Byron rising to rage in an instant, and crying aloud, 'No, we will bring him to account!' put his horse to the gallop, and in another moment was in pursuit of the offensive trooper with the Pistol-Club militant at his heels. The poet and the trooper were through the gate before the guards could interfere; but whilst the soldier was clattering up to Lung'Arno, with his pursuer gaining upon him at every stride, Shelley and the other members of the club were having a ruffle with the soldiers at the gate, who had turned out with muskets and bayonets to breast the foaming flood of chivalry. After throwing a glove with divers hot words at the serjeant-major, under the notion that the fellow was an officer of superior quality whom a nobleman might challenge to a duel, Byron rode back to the gate, to find Shelley bleeding from a sabre-cut on the head, and Taafe (the originator of the row) keeping at a safe distance from the fray, alike to the indignation and contemptuous amusement of the ladies in the carriage. The most serious incident of the rather absurd affair was that, as he galloped past the Palazzo Lanfranchi after the glove had been hurled at

him, the trooper was stabbed with a stable-fork by one of Byron's servants, who rushing out from the mansion gave him an ugly 'dig' in the ribs with the scarcely martial weapon. It says much for the disaffection of the populace to their rulers, that no one came forth to identify the perpetrator of this violent deed, done in broad daylight and in the presence of half-a-hundred excited people, and that the blind beggars of the Lung 'Arno, hearing the English were unarmed, sidled up to some of them, and gave them formidable stiletos, taken from the sleeves of ragged gaberdines. Responsible for the order of such a populace, the police had reason to think gravely of the disturbance, which had given the trooper on duty a wound that might prove fatal. The hubbub was succeeded by an official inquiry, that must have disposed the Tuscan Government to wish Lord Byron well away from Pisa with his pistol-shooting friends and his turbulent servants. Three months later (at the end of June or the beginning of July), when Byron and the Gambas were in villegiatura at Montenero, the attention of the Leghorn police was called to another disturbance, in which the young Count Gamba had been stabbed by one of the poet's menials. At the same time, whilst his people were earning the disfavour of the police, Byron had neither the prudence nor the courtesy to conciliate the Grand-duke and Grand-duchess by gratifying their wish to see him at Court. Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that to rid themselves of a sojourner within their bounds, who showed them no civility whilst giving them some trouble and more anxiety, the Tuscan authorities did precisely what the Papal

agents had done twelve months since at Ravenna. Ordering the Gambas to quit Tuscan territory, with a knowledge that to avoid a convent Teresa would soon be compelled to follow her father, and with reason for thinking that Byron would soon follow, if he did not accompany, her to another asylum, the Tuscan Government at the beginning of July bade the two Counts pack their baggage and move on. The notice to quit had the desired effect. Towards the end of September 1822 (some weeks after the cremation of poor Shelley on the sand-beach of the Bay of Spezzia) Byron and the Countess Guiccioli withdrew from the Palazzo Lanfranchi, and moved from Pisa to Albaro, the suburb of Genoa, where Mrs. Shelley had hired at a rent of 24*l.* a-year, for Byron and the Gambas, the Villa Saluzzo, a spacious house lying amid vineyards and olive woods, and had taken for herself and the Hunts at a rent of 20*l.* a year, the smaller residence called the Casa Negroto, of which dwelling-place Hunt wrote, ‘There were forty rooms in it, some of them such as would be considered splendid in England, and all neat and new, with borders and arabesques. The balcony and staircase were of marble; and there was a little flower-garden.’ After he had settled in the Villa Saluzzo, and begun to feel at home in the new abode, Byron wrote to Murray, ‘Count Gamba’s family, the father and mother (? brother) and daughter are residing with me by Mr. Hill (the minister’s) recommendation, as a safer asylum from the political persecutions than they could have in another residence: but they occupy one part of a large house, and I the other, and our establishments are quite separate.’

‘Genoa again! With what different feelings we beheld it the first time!’ Leigh Hunt exclaims in a page of his book (so often quoted by the present writer), referring to the pleasant anticipations that animated him when he touched the port for the first time on the way to Leghorn. To apprehend the change in the litterateur’s feelings, one must glance at circumstances under which he had started for Italy. For some time Byron had been hankering for a newspaper, that, powerful chiefly through his connexion with it, should be in his hands on terms that, whilst affording him all the pleasures, should exempt him from all the drudgery and other disagreeable incidents of editorial authority. The paper should be established with his money, so that he should have proprietorial authority to throw whatever he liked into its columns. For its success and his own comfort, he should require the zealous co-operation of some comrade of the literary craft, who would throw all his heart into the enterprise for the sake of the emoluments of a joint proprietor and joint editor, entering the concern without capital. His coadjutor, besides being a facile and lively poet (for poetry would be a chief feature of the new journal) must be a notable personage of the literary guild, with power to push the paper into public favour. The paper should be bright, sunny, humorous, superlatively satirical and daring. Seeing the need for a coadjutor, for whom he had a personal liking and with whom he could work harmoniously, Byron was by no means disposed to regard poverty as a disqualification for the office. A poor man would be likely to work more resolutely than a rich coadjutor. Still benevolent,

when the benevolent project promised to yield a handsome interest for invested money, Byron relished the notion of having a coadjutor whose 'fortune would be made' (as the phrase goes) by the enterprise, and who would be duly grateful to the originator of the fortune-making affair. With such an organ in his hands, the poet felt he could revive his waning popularity (or rather, the popularity that seemed to him to be waning), could repay with scathing vehemence the satire of saucy critics, and (a matter not to be overlooked) could administer seasonable chastisement to Murray, whenever that publisher should be wanting in loyalty and devotion to the poet, out of whom he was making something more than a modest fortune.

Moore was the first person to whom Byron submitted the project, together with the offer of the coadjutor's place. They must have an office, keep their names secret, and do a thing in weekly journalism that should set the Thames on fire. 'Why, man, Byron wrote to his friend, 'if you were to take to this in good earnest, your debts would be paid in a twelve-month . . . But you must live in London, and I also, to bring it to bear, and *we must keep it a secret*. As for the living in London, I would make that not difficult to you (if you would allow me), until we could see whether one means or other (the success of the plan, for instance) would not make it quite easy for you, as well as your family.' These words should be remembered in bare justice to the poet and journalist, to whom Byron made the offer, which Moore declined. For a short time Moore was tickled by the glittering bait, and thought of biting at it. On consideration he was too cautious even to nibble. The Irishman,



who would have been called 'canny' had he been a Scotchman, was by no means deficient in caution; and he knew enough of Byron's failings, to mistrust the project, and to be certain that if he closed with the proposal he would soon lose his friends. The bait which Moore avoided after swimming twice or thrice daintily about it, was gorged by Leigh Hunt.

Though greed of gain was only one of the several motives that disposed Byron to this venture, it cannot be questioned it was a strong motive. He expected to make much money by the venture; and Hunt, ever hopeful (notwithstanding his frequent fits of despondency) of enrichment without trouble, shared Byron's agreeable confidence in the commercial soundness of the project. It can also be conceived that Byron relished the thought of doing Hunt a good turn. There were several reasons why Byron rather liked the man, whom he regarded disdainfully for his want of breeding. Byron in his youthful generosity had dined with Hunt in Horsemonger Lane Gaol; and in thinking of Hunt, he had a pleasant recollection of his own magnanimity on that occasion. Hunt was one of the very few London journalists who had dared to write in Byron's defence during the storm of 1816; and when his better nature had fair play, Byron was to the last emotionally and unsteadily grateful. Within certain limits Byron had a respect for Hunt's poetical capacity and politics. Moreover, Shelley thought highly, far too highly, of Hunt's literary power, attainments, and nature; and when Byron determined to invite Hunt to come out to him in Italy, he was very much under Shelley's influence. There were other considerations which aided in de-

termining Byron to take Hunt for the coadjutor without capital. Shelley would be a zealous contributor to the paper for Hunt's sake, should Hunt become the joint proprietor and acting editor. Moreover, like Shelley, who was strangely uninformed on the matter, Byron was under the impression that 'The Examiner' was still in the hands of the Hunts,—that John Hunt remained the proprietor of the journal, and that in Italy Leigh Hunt would still be the editor (out for a long holiday) of the powerful journal. The new journal of poetry and humour would therefore be aided by the old journal of wit and politics. With Shelley by his side, Byron may well have imagined that Shelley, Leigh Hunt and John Hunt (the robust man of business) were worth more for the purpose in view than Tommy Moore, with all his influence in the drawing-rooms.

On hearing of the compact between Leigh Hunt and Byron, with Shelley for a kind of third party (if not third partner to the agreement), Moore and Murray fumed with annoyance and jealousy. Should the new literary venture prove successful (which was not unlikely), and should its success cause Byron to think well of John Hunt as a man of business, the publisher saw it was on the cards that he might lose the poet of whom (after Byron's death) he exclaimed bitterly to Trelawny, 'That great man with his pen could alone have supported a publishing establishment.' On the other hand, in the growing intimacy of Byron and Shelley, and in the possibility that the new journal would succeed, and that the two proprietors would be welded together by their good fortune into closest friends, Byron's biographer-elect (who by

his own confession often had misgivings of his hold on Byron's affections) saw something more than a possibility that he would lose the confidence of his 'noble friend.' It was even conceivable that in the course of years his noble friend would demand restitution of the 'Memoirs' from Murray, and appoint Leigh Hunt his biographer *vice* Thomas Moore, cashiered.

On this point Byron had given both his publisher and the Irish songster cause for surprise, uneasiness, and suspicion. In November 1821 he joined with Moore in conveying to Murray the copyright of the 'Memoirs' which he had given Moore in 1819. The deed of assignment, which conveyed this literary property to the publisher had not been executed many weeks, when Byron began to regret the steps he had taken for the posthumous publication of the autobiographic sketches. The arrangements for Leigh Hunt's journey to Italy had been scarcely completed, when Byron moved Moore to join with him in getting from Murray a power of redeeming the MSS. Leigh Hunt was still on his way from London to Leghorn, when at Byron's instance and urgent request, the deed of 6 May, 1822, was executed by which Byron obtained the power to redeem the 'Memoirs' into his own hands. Byron's change of feeling respecting the autobiographic papers may well have puzzled and alarmed Moore and Murray. Without the cue (as he certainly was) to Byron's reason for wishing for this power over the 'Memoirs' he had so lightly given away, Murray may well have suspected his great poet of thinking he might some day wish to put them in the hands of another publisher. Unaware (as he

certainly was) of Byron's real motive and purpose in the matter, Moore may well have suspected his friend of intending to choose another historian of his doings.

Murray, fearful of losing his poet, and Tom Moore, apprehensive of losing his friend, did their best to inspire the author of 'Don Juan' with distaste for his fantastic venture, and with alarm at his rashness, even before it was decided to call the new journal, 'The Liberal.' It was insinuated to Byron that he would lose caste, impair his proper influence, render himself ridiculous by associating himself so closely and openly with such a brace of literary *mauvais sujets* as Leigh Hunt the poetaster and Shelley the atheist. After 'The Liberal' had begun its brief and unfortunate career, Moore, who had declined to contribute a single column of jingle to the miserable indiscretion, implored his 'noble friend' almost pathetically 'to emerge out of the "Liberal" as quickly as possible. It grieves me,' he added, 'to urge anything so much against Hunt's interest; but I should not hesitate to use the same language to himself were I near him. I would, if I were you, serve him in every possible way but this—I would give him (if he would accept of it) the profits of the same works, published separately—but I would not mix myself up in this way with others. I would not become a partner in this sort of miscellaneous "*pot au feu*," where the bad flavour of one ingredient is sure to taint all the rest. I would be, if I were *you*, alone, single-handed, and, as such, invincible.' One may well smile at this from a writer—speaking *in grief*, under an urgent sense of the obligations, of

friendship—who was well aware that the ‘Vision of Judgment’ more than any other of the miscellaneous ingredients had tainted the ‘*pot-au-feu*’ and rendered the whole mess offensive to the public palate.

Byron and Leigh Hunt had both altered greatly during the six years that had passed since they bade one another farewell in London. Byron had grown hard, bitter, cynical, greedy of money. In such life as Byron had led since his withdrawal from England, an angel from heaven would have deteriorated into unfitness for angelic society; and though at its best rich in kindness and generous impulsiveness, Byron’s nature was never faultless. That morbid selfishness which (in Hobbhouse’s opinion) stained the man was latent, and sometimes visible, in the boy. On the other hand, Leigh Hunt, at all times deficient in moral robustness, had lost any spirit of honest self-dependence that may have animated him in his earlier time. Besides ‘conceiting him into a martyr’ (Byron’s expression), Horsemonger Lane Gaol, where he lived luxuriously, and to a great degree on the benefactions of his political admirers, had been a bad school for a man with his besetting infirmity. The pecuniary difficulties, that followed his liberation from prison, confirmed him in his disposition to live indolently and self-indulgently on the resources of other people. Having first robbed him of the power to taste the bitterness of unearned bread, circumstances had vitiated his moral palate so that it discovered a peculiar sweetness in bread not earned by the sweat of his own brow or the labour of his own brain. It was not enough for him to say that, after strenuously striving to the utmost of his ability to sustain himself by a compara-

tively unremunerative vocation, a man of letters might in moments of great emergency and unforeseen trouble accept without shame pecuniary help from his affluent friends. He had a curious and most demoralizing notion that men of genius—especially of genius like his own—had a natural and manifest right to take from the pockets of their prosperous acquaintances whatever gold they needed for their necessities. He even contrived to persuade himself that by accepting money from a well-to-do friend he laid himself under no obligation to the giver of the money. On the contrary, if any obligation attended the transaction, it was one that made him his benefactor's benefactor, and required the giver to feel grateful to the receiver of the gift. 'I have not,' he wrote, 'had that horror of being under obligation, which is thought an essential refinement in money matters, and which leads some really generous persons, as well as some who only seek personal importance in their generosity, to think they have a right to bestow favours which they would be mortified to receive.'

Though Dr. Elze uses too harsh a word, when he says, 'Hunt's connexion with Byron commenced with a falsehood,' it cannot be questioned that Hunt was deficient in the honourable frankness which is so large a part of fair dealing, when he arranged with Byron to come out to him in Italy, without letting him know, that he had ceased to be editor of 'The Examiner,' and, being absolutely without any source of income, had no prospect of income save the revenue he hoped to get from the journal not yet in existence. He was bound in honour to inform both

Byron and Shelley, that should he come to Italy with his family, they or one of them would have to keep him, his wife and his six (or seven) children, till the projected journal should afford him an income, and that, in case the enterprise miscarried, they would have him on their hands for a longer period. This information Harold Skimpole withheld from his two friends, who, though they knew him to be in pecuniary embarrassment and had every reasonable readiness to assist him, were both under the impression that a regular (though possibly somewhat insufficient) income would be coming to him from the office of a London newspaper. There is also no doubt that, whilst he refrained from showing his friends the real state of his circumstances, he was well aware of their misconception of his case. In this reticence respecting matters about which he should have been freely communicative, Leigh Hunt, if not actually guilty of positive falsehood, was certainly guilty of disingenuous concealment.

It follows that this Micawber of the literary world went out to Italy with his wife and children, to prey on the bounty and to live (certainly for a time, possibly till he and his family should be returned carriage-free to England) on the resources of Shelley, who was by no means rich, and of Byron to whom he was but slightly known. Byron was astonished at learning, either whilst the Hunts were on their long voyage (of five months) to him, or immediately after their arrival at Leghorn, that his selected coadjutor had not enough in his pocket for a month's current expenses. Under the circumstances he may well have been nettled at the discovery ; and the poet

—so nicely careful over his petty disbursements as to lose his temper once every seven days over his weekly bills, and so impatient of imposition and extortion as to demand bloody satisfaction of the military horse-sharper who sold him an unsound animal—was not the man to submit tamely to Hunt's arrangements for sucking money from him. From a letter (misdated by an entire year and misplaced in Moore's 'Life') it appears that Byron had received a sufficiently plain intimation of Hunt's predatory character, more than four months before his appearance at Montenero. On February 15, 1822 (not 1823, as Moore misprints it), Shelley wrote to Byron:—

‘MY DEAR LORD BYRON,—I enclose you a letter from Hunt, which annoys me on more than one account. You will observe the post-script, and you know me well enough to feel how painful a task is set me in commenting upon it. Hunt had urged me more than once to ask you to lend him this money. My answer consisted in sending him all I could spare, which I have now literally done. Your kindness in fitting up a part of your own house for his accommodation I sensibly felt, and willingly accepted from you on his part, but, believe me, without the slightest intention of imposing, or, if I could help it, allowing to be imposed, any heavier task on your purse. As it has come to this in spite of my exertions, I will not conceal from you the low ebb of my own money affairs in the present moment,—that is, my absolute incapacity of assisting Hunt further. I do not think poor Hunt's promise to pay in a given time is worth very much; but mine is less



subject to uncertainty, and I should be happy to be responsible for any engagement he may have proposed to you. I am so much annoyed by this subject that I hardly know what to write and much less to say ; and I have need of all your indulgence in judging both my feelings and expressions. I shall see you by-and-by.

‘ Believe me yours most faithfully and sincerely,  
‘ P. B. SHELLEY.’

On his arrival in Leghorn harbour, where he made Trelawny's acquaintance, Leigh Hunt was in the brightest and blithest spirits, overflowing with praise of the Italian sun and climate, pleased with everything about him, and pleasing everybody. If he was disappointed that Byron, tarrying at his villa outside the town, had not come to welcome him in the harbour, he concealed his discontent. The joyous, riant, rather too affable gentleman does not appear to have exhibited any mortification at the greater poet's neglect to call upon him. For the moment he was in no mood to look out for slights ; was too delighted to find himself in Italy, whither he had come apparently for pleasure rather than business, to be out of humour for a mere trifle. Moreover, he found congenial occupation in providing for the comfort of Mrs. Hunt (an invalid), and arranging for the conveyance of his babes and baggage to Pisa. A day or two later, however, his spirits fell, when he walked through Leghorn's hot and dusty suburb, to the hottest-looking villa he had ever seen, to make a call on Byron, who had not offered him an opportunity for going to Montenero, *to return* a call. Arriv-

ing at an unfortunate moment, when Byron and Teresa and the young Count Pietro were in their highest excitement about the murderous manservant, who had just stuck a knife into Teresa's brother, the man of letters had a reception, for which he could not be thankful, though he had no right to resent it. Byron's fatness was not the only thing that distressed the visitor. At a glance the mere man of letters saw that the nobleman of letters was no person to lend rouleaux of gold pieces inconsiderately. Having journeyed from England for a pleasant time with Lord Byron, who only six years since was bent on distributing a thousand guineas amongst three necessitous authors, whilst bailiffs were actually seizing the books of his library, Leigh Hunt (a nice reader of the human countenance) was troubled by the worldly hardness and selfish shrewdness of the poet's still handsome face. A chilly tremor played about the heart of the needy *litterateur* who all through his tedious voyage had looked forward to the ease and state and luxury, in which he, and his dear wife, and all his dear children would live, after being welcomed to the palace of the lordly exile, who required his assistance in a graceful enterprise.

Beginning as he meant to go on, Lord Byron from the first showed Mr. Hunt that he was not a man to be imposed upon. And going on as he began, Lord Byron, to the last hour of a vexatious and ignoble association, was very careful not to be imposed upon by 'the Cockneys' (as he designated them contemptuously to Trelawny, before they had been forty-eight hours in his house), for whose accom-

modation the ground-floor of the Palazzo Lanfranchi had been fitted at his cost, with suitable furniture, which Shelley had selected and intended to pay for. In some respects he was too careful. He might have been more courteous, without being less careful. He should at least have behaved with a show of cordiality and politeness to poor Mrs. Hunt, to whom he accorded no other greeting than a severely formal bow, without a single word, when she entered his house, exhausted with illness and the fatigue of travelling. He could have kept the Hunts to their proper floor of his palace, without patting the big bull-dog on the head, and saying to him in Trelawny's hearing, 'Don't let the Cockneys pass that way.' So long as they lived under the same roof the two poets however maintained a show of mutual complaisance. Though he seldom invited his literary coadjutor to the salons of the first floor, he gossiped with him in the garden. Occasionally he mounted him on a horse, and took him for a ride to the farm-house. Now and then he even relaxed so far as to invite the 'chief of the Cockneys' to dinner, and to hold a brief conversation with Mrs. Hunt, who was at no pains to conciliate the peer. As Mrs. Hunt could not speak Italian and the Countess Guiccioli could not speak a sentence of English, the ladies had a good excuse for keeping apart. At first Teresa showed a disposition to behave graciously to Hunt; but on finding him an unsympathetic listener to her complaints of Byron's faulty behaviour she dropped him from her consideration. Shelley's death, following so quickly on the arrival of the Cockneys, placed the occupant of the basement rooms in a terribly false position. Had Shelley

lived, his influence would have diminished the friction attending the intercourse of the rich lord and the penniless author. Under Shelley's handling Byron would have been less inclined to resent than laugh at Hunt's crafty silence respecting his disconnexion from 'The Examiner.' Moreover, as Shelley would have borne at least half the burden of the shiftless family Byron would have been less apprehensive for his own purse. As Byron wrote the ninth, tenth and eleventh cantos of 'Don Juan' in August, whilst the Hunts were under his roof in the Lung 'Arno, it may be taken for granted that the father of the little Hunts was not absent from the poet's mind when he wrote the stanza,

'Alas ! how deeply painful is all payment !  
Take lives, take wives, take aught except men's purses,  
As Machiavel shows those in purple raiment,  
Such is the shortest way to general curses.  
They hate a murderer much less than a claimant  
On that sweet ore which everybody nurses.—  
Kill a man's family, and he may brook it,  
But keep your hands out of his breeches' pocket.'

The amount of the money expended by Byron on the Hunts was not great. Beside paying for the 'good and respectable' furniture for their rooms in the Palazzo Lanfranchi, and sending 200*l.* to England for the charges of their voyage to Italy, he gave Hunt 70*l.* at Pisa, defrayed the cost of their journey from Pisa to Genoa, and supplied them with another 30*l.* to enable them to go from Pisa to Florence. The sum probably did not greatly exceed 500*l.* There was no need for him to give them more ; but under the circumstances he could scarcely have given them

less. From the way in which Leigh Hunt writes of money, pecuniary obligations, and Byronic niggardliness, it is obvious that the sum would have risen to thousands, had it not been for Byron's resoluteness in resisting the insatiable applicant 'for more.' It is a sordid business to smile about. But Hunt's indignant account of Byron's device for keeping the demands on his purse down to the minimum is droll as well as slightly sickening. Hunt's notion was that the money should have been handed over in the way least likely to wound the recipient's pride. Byron, on the contrary, saw it would be to his disadvantage to part with his gold thus considerably and delicately. 'During our residence at Pisa,' says the *litterateur* in difficulties, 'I had from him, or rather from his steward, to whom he always sent me for the money, and who doled it out to me as if my disgraces were being counted, the sum of 70*l*.'

Whilst the position at the Palazzo Lanfranchi was irritating to Byron, it was exasperating to Hunt, who, saved from sycophancy by constitutional insolence, was intolerant alike of his social superiors and his intellectual superiors. For weeks before the appearance of the first number of 'The Liberal,' the joint-adventurers in the ill-fated enterprise (that perished in the delivery of its fourth budget of wit and wisdom) were as thoroughly and heartily at feud as Moore and Murray wished them to be. Under these circumstances it is not surprising that when Byron moved with his dependants from Pisa to Genoa, he would not travel in the company of the Hunts. The migration was accomplished towards the end of December. Whilst Byron went by land with Teresa

Guiccioli to Lerici, the rest of the party went thither by water,—the Hunts in a felucca ; Byron's servants, with 'what the Yankees would have called a freight of notions,' in another boat ; whilst Trelawny, as director-in-chief of the operations, convoyed the voyagers in Byron's yacht the ' Bolivar,' having the plate, books and papers under his especial care. Meeting at Lerici—where Byron was detained for four days (two of them spent in bed) by one of his violent attacks of indigestion—the whole party proceeded, after visiting Shelley's last home, from Lerici to Sestri by water, Byron and the Countess making the passage in a fourth boat by themselves. 'It was pretty,' says Hunt, 'to see the boats with their white sails, gliding by the rocks, over that blue sea.' The remainder of the journey from Sestri to Genoa was by land,—over the maritime part of the Apennines, lying (says the same descriptive writer) 'in a succession of great doughy billows, like so much enormous pudding, or petrified mud ;'—Byron and Madame Guiccioli still holding aloof from the Hunts, till they came to Albaro, where the two poets (according to Byron's statements of the case) had scarcely any intercourse, with the exception of unavoidable conferences on matters of business. Well might poor Hunt ejaculate, 'Genoa again ! With what different feelings we beheld it the first time !'

## CHAPTER VI.

## GENOA.

Casa Saluzzi—Failure of 'The Liberal'—Byron's Annoyance at the Misadventure—His Literary Work at Albaro—The Blessingtons at Genoa—Count D'Orsay's 'English Notes'—Message of Peace to Lady Byron—Leigh Hunt on Byronic Pettinesses—Teresa Guiccioli's Influence—Byron's Letters to her from Cephalonia—His Correspondence with the London Greek Committee—Farewell to the Blessingtons—Departure from Genoa—Leghorn—Goethe's Letter—Argostoli.

LEAVING Pisa in September 1822, when he was well within one year and seven months of his death, Byron went to Genoa and for something less than ten months' abode with the Gambas (the two Counts and Teresa Guiccioli) in the Casa Saluzzi,—the house, standing in a courtyard planted with cypress-trees, cut fantastically in accordance with the practice of what the English gardeners of the seventeenth century used to term 'topiary art;' the house where he entertained the Blessingtons and Count D'Orsay, and in January 1823 received the enthusiastic young Frenchman, Mons. J. J. Coulmann, who having expected to find him a person of haughty bearing and heroic presence, was greatly surprised by the cordial manners, diminutive stature, and simple costume of the poet 'whose publishers paid him a guinea a line;' the house famous in Byronic story as the scene of his last literary labours, and of the negotiations with the

London Greek Committee, that resulted in the fatal expedition to Greece. Planted in a picturesque suburb, the Casa Saluzzi was a pleasant place, commanding fine views of Genoa, the gulf and the Apennine range.

The first number of 'The Liberal' came from London to the joint-proprietors by the Genoese post. It has been already observed how quickly the birth of the unlucky publication was followed by its death. No one can say that Byron figures creditably in this business. In truth, the affair of 'The Liberal' is the episode of his purely literary career in which he shows to least advantage. The journal having been a thing of his own conception and inception, and its failure being due almost entirely to his own capricious distaste for the enterprise before the first number went to press, he should have had the manliness to confess himself alike responsible for the project and the misadventure. But, instead of taking the discredit to himself, he held the brothers Hunt (especially Leigh Hunt) accountable both for the undertaking and the miscarriage. By clouding the mental and moral vision, and throwing matters out of historic perspective, anger disposes even truthful men to untruthfulness ; and of all living men Byron under irritation was the least likely or able to take an accurate and judicial view of the circumstances of his displeasure. Ceasing to hold himself responsible for the journal as soon as he foresaw failure for it, he began to think and talk of it as the affair of the Hunts. Having designed the thing for the attainment of his own ends and the gratification of his own ambition, the venture had no sooner come to grief, than he contrived to persuade himself



that his only motive for having a part in the fiasco was benevolence towards the Hunts. 'I am afraid the Journal is a bad business, and won't do,' he wrote to Murray in October 9, 1822, 'but in it I am sacrificing *myself* for others—I can have no advantage in it. I believe the *brothers Hunts* to be honest men : I am sure that they are poor ones ; they have not a Nap. They pressed me to engage in this work, and in an evil hour I consented. Still I shall not repent, if I can do them the least service. I have done all I can for Leigh Hunt since he came here ; but it is almost useless ;—his wife is ill, his six' (there were *seven*, by the way, according to Trelawny) 'children not very tractable, and in the affairs of this world he himself is a child. The death of Shelley left them totally aground ; and I could not see them in such a state without using the common feelings of humanity, and what means were in my power, to set them afloat again.' From anyone but Byron this would be staggering. Even from him it causes eyes to open with astonishment. In the same strain he wrote to a lady [Letter 509, Moore's 'Life'], 'If you mean to say that, had he' (*i.e.* Leigh Hunt) 'been a wealthy man, I would have joined in this Journal, I answer in the negative. . . . I engaged in the Journal from goodwill towards him, added to respect for his character, literary and personal ; and no less for his political courage, as well as regret for his present circumstances ; I did this in the hope that he might, with the same aid from literary friends of literary contributions (which is requisite for all journals of a mixed nature), render himself independent.' This was the amazing way in which Byron spoke and wrote to his acquaint-

ance about his part in an enterprise, which had originated in his own mere motion for the attainment of his own private ends, and for which had it been successful he would have taken to himself something more than the lion's share of the credit. It may not be imagined that he was fibbing wilfully. Had he not persuaded himself that he was drawn into the affair by benevolent concern for the Hunts, he could not have written thus to Moore and Murray who to his knowledge knew as much as himself about the matter. As soon as he quarrelled, Byron talked wide of the truth—without knowing it. The same Byron who, in his excusable annoyance at Leigh Hunt, accounted in this marvellous fashion for his disastrous entanglement with the needy man of letters and *his* journal, was the same Byron who, in his furious rages against his wife, thought her the moral Clytemnestra of her comparatively unoffending lord, and in his colder resentment against her persisted in declaring that he could not conceive why she had quarrelled with him.

At Genoa Byron wrote 'The Age of Bronze,' 'The Island,' and the twelfth, thirteenth, fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth cantos of 'Don Juan,'—the great, unfinished satire which Goethe, with all his admiration for the performance, declared the most immoral poem that was ever written. Whilst thus busy with his pen he had a civil pretext for seeing but little of Leigh Hunt; of whom, by the way, he probably saw more than he admitted in his letters to Moore and Murray. Speaking of himself as 'passing a melancholy time at Albaro,' Hunt says, 'My intercourse with Lord Byron, though less than before, was considerable; and we were always, as the phrase is,

“on good terms.” He knew what I felt, for I said it. I also knew what he thought, for he said that “in a manner;” and he was in the habit of giving you a good deal to understand, in what he did not say. In the midst of all his strange conduct, he professed a great personal regard. He could do the most humiliating things, insinuate the bitterest, both of me and my friends, and then affect to do all away with a soft word, protesting that nothing he ever said was meant to apply to myself.’ The truth of the matter seems to be that, whilst keeping vigilant guard over his breeches pockets, and resolutely checking each disposition to yield to Harold Skimpole’s insidious arts, Byron softened occasionally to the man whom he pitied for being a poor devil, and would have liked heartily had he been a self-sustaining ‘poor devil!’

In April and May 1823, Byron saw much of the Blessingtons and their *Cupidon déchainé*,—the Irish Earl to whom Lady Byron’s trustees had refused to lend the poet’s money; the Countess who had already published a book or two; and the young Frenchman whose MS. journal of English society and manners afforded Byron much diversion. (What has become of the young Count’s Journal? In whose keeping does it rest? Will it be found two centuries hence in English libraries, side by side with Grammont’s ‘Memoirs?’) Calling at the Casa Saluzzi on April Fool’s Day, 1823, the Blessingtons left Genoa on the second day of the following June, after spending just two months in familiar intercourse with the poet, who, opening his heart to the Countess on the old story of his domestic troubles (a subject, by the way,

on which he could be curiously garrulous to casual acquaintances), opened it the more fully and precisely, on discovering that Lady Blessington was on friendly terms with a gentleman (even then at Genoa), whose sister was Lady Byron's most confidential friend. Conversing on the one hand with this gentleman about the anxieties of his sister's especial friend, and on the other hand with the poet himself about his feelings towards his wife, it was natural for Lady Blessington to entertain a wish to be of service in bringing about a friendly understanding between the long-separated husband and wife. One noteworthy result of this amiable readiness on Lady Blessington's part, and her free talk with Byron on the interesting topic, was that he wrote her the following epistle:—

‘*May 3, 1823.*

‘DEAR LADY BLESSINGTON,—My request would be for a copy of the miniature of Lady Byron, which I have seen in the possession of the late Lady Noel, as I have no picture, or indeed memorial of any kind of Lady Byron, as all her letters were in her own possession before I left England, and we have had no correspondence since—at least on her part.

‘My message, with regard to the infant, is simply to this effect—that in the event of any accident occurring to the mother, and my remaining the survivor, it would be my wish to have her plans carried into effect, both with regard to the education of the child, and the person or persons under whose care Lady Byron might be desirous that she should be placed. It is not my intention to interfere with her in any way on the subject during her life; and I presume

that it would be some consolation to her to know (if she is in ill health, as I am given to understand) that in *no* case would anything be done, as far as I am concerned, but in strict conformity with Lady Byron's own wishes and intentions—left in what manner she thought proper.

‘Believe me, dear Lady Blessington, your obliged,  
&c. &c.

‘NOEL BYRON.’

Three days later in a letter dated May 6, 1823, (enclosing the poet's withheld letter to Lady Byron, of November 17, 1821,—printed in the preceding chapter), Byron says, ‘The letter which I enclose I was prevented sending by my despair of its doing any good. I was perfectly sincere when I wrote it, and am so still. But it is difficult for me to withstand the thousand provocations on that subject, which both friends and foes have for seven years been throwing in the way of a man whose feelings were once quick, and whose temper was never patient. But “returning were as tedious as go o’er.” I feel this as much as ever Macbeth did ; and it is a dreary sensation, which at least avenges the real and imaginary wrongs of one of the two unfortunate persons it concerns.’

The only persons to deny or doubt Byron's sincerity in this correspondence with Lady Blessington and in the withheld letter of November 17, 1821, to Lady Byron, are those who have been induced to believe him to have been guilty of misconduct that, lying beyond forgiveness, rendered it impossible for him to have been sincere in writing letters as though

forgiveness and reconciliation were possible. But it is certain that the persons thinking thus of his misconduct were led to think so by misconception or misrepresentation. It is certain he had committed no such unpardonable offence. It follows therefore that the grounds for questioning his sincerity are imaginary. There must be an end to personal history if these letters may not be taken as evidence of the state of feeling which they indicate. Unsupported by a single scrap of good testimony, discredited by the conclusive evidence as to the nature and extent of his misbehaviour to his wife, the notion that the poet played the hypocrite in this correspondence, and fabricated the withheld letter merely to show it about to his advantage, must be dismissed as absolutely ludicrous.

The letter to Lady Blessington was a sincere overture by the poet for something like a friendly arrangement with his wife. To most readers it will seem something more,—the first step towards a petition for complete reconciliation. By asking for his wife's miniature, because he had no picture of her and desired the solace of a portrait to strengthen his recollection of her lineaments, he declared with equal delicacy and force, that he longed to look again on her face. In promising never to interfere with her in any matter touching their child's education, he made a promise (to which Lady Blessington and every reader of his letter to that lady would be witnesses), that must have afforded great comfort to the mother who, now that Ada had ceased to be a mere nursling, was in constant fear that he would soon come to England and claim his daughter. It was a momentous con-

cession of parental right, for which he might well feel sure at least of his wife's gratitude. It was his return for the lock of the child's hair, and the words written by his wife on the paper, enclosing the hair. After this exchange of conciliatory gifts, friends surely had reason to hope that the time was not far distant when the husband and wife would meet occasionally in amity, even though they might not think it well to repeat the hazardous experiment of living together under the same roof.

Whilst Byron's thoughts were turning thus tenderly to the wife, of whom he had written so many violent and cruel words, and to whom he had hoped in 1816 to return in a few months, his feelings for Teresa, which had never known the delicacy of love, were fast losing the warmth of dying passion. Byron's long separation from her, after her withdrawal from the Papal territory, had resulted in a brief, though faint, renewal of his former delight in her beauty and society. 'Fancying she walked in the eyes of the whole world, a heroine by the side of a poet,' Leigh Hunt admits that when he first 'saw her at Montenero, she was in a state of excitement and exaltation, and had really something of this look.' Untruthfulness in actual words, be it observed, was not one of Hunt's infirmities. Spite and malice never caused him to pen a deliberate falsehood even against Byron. His suggestion that Byron was deficient in masculine courage—the only statement resembling a falsehood in his base book—was not so much an assertion of a fact, as an ungenerous but sincere inference from unquestionable facts,—the poet's physical timidity and nervous unsteadiness, when he was taken un-

awares by little dangers, till he had found time to gather his fortitude and resoluteness. The painful fact of Hunt's book to Byron's disparagement is its truthfulness. Bringing together all the great poet's pettinesses and meannesses, to which a generous friend would have closed his eyes, it tells them so veraciously that Trelawny, with all his disposition to admire Byron, was constrained to admit that of all the numerous books about the poet, it was the book which gave the best idea of the man, as he appeared to his ordinary acquaintance. Consequently Leigh Hunt is a reliable witness respecting Teresa Guiccioli; and he had not known her many weeks before he saw that Byron had no real love for her, and that she had no real love for him,—that whilst he took a perverse delight in mismanaging her, she 'did not in the least know how to manage him, when he was wrong.' The poet found pleasure in shocking her by no means nice sense of delicacy; and after worrying her into petulant exhibitions of disapproval of his conduct, he would look 'as if he enjoyed her vehemence, and did not believe a word of it.' Besides protesting against his words or acts, and 'nagging at him' to his face before witnesses, she used to make complaints against him to his acquaintances behind his back. Looking no older than her years at Montenero, she in a few months assumed an air of age and weariness and secret misery. This 'rapid and very singular change,' says Hunt, 'took place to the surprise of everybody. In the course of a few months she seemed to have lived as many years. It is most likely in that interval that she discovered she had no real hold on the affections of her companion.' The witness's 'every-



one' includes, of course, Trelawny (who used to bear evidence to Hunt's accuracy), and Mrs. Shelley and Mrs. Williams. What Hunt saw was foreseen by Shelley, who had no sooner made Teresa's acquaintance than he detected her insufficiency for the difficult place into which passion had carried her, and predicted that she would have plenty of time to repent her rashness in leaving her husband for so changeful an admirer. Knowing that Byron had never really loved her, Hoppner had no doubt that a chief cause of the poet's restlessness in Italy was a desire to get away from her. Hunt, Trelawny, Mrs. Shelley, Mrs. Williams and Hoppner are a goodly company of witnesses to this point. Their evidence is not to be disposed of by the smartness with which Tom Moore whipt up Teresa's testimony in her own favour,—so as 'to run her' as an angelic woman against the unrelenting Lady Byron.

Another witness to the same point was Byron himself. Sitting at the stern of the 'Hercules,' when they were making their slow passage from Leghorn to Cephalonia, Byron said to Trelawny, 'The Greeks are returned to barbarism; Mitford says the people never were anything better. Nor do I know what I am going for. *I was tired of Italy*, and liked Greece. and the London Committee told me I should be of use, but of what use they did not say nor did I see.' This confession that he was tired of Italy and wanted to get out of the country, where he left Teresa and her father to go their own way, is significant of a state of feeling towards the young Countess that may be called 'thinly veiled estrangement.' No doubt he had several reasons for wishing to leave the land.

The mortifying and humiliating failure of the Carbonarist movement, to which he had committed himself so openly, was one cause of his distaste for the country, where he had so often declared his purpose of spending the remainder of his days. Remorse for his Venetian depravity was another cause of the distaste. Italy was mournfully associated with the sorrow that came to him from the death of his natural daughter, whose interment in England was a pathetic revelation of her father's affection for the country of his birth and the scenes of his boyhood. At the same time he disliked Italy as the scene of his recent literary humiliation, which he would not have been so desirous of shifting from himself to his coadjutor, had it not touched his pride acutely. Moreover, his relations with Hunt, on which he cannot have reflected with complacence, and the feeling of sorrow and repugnance, with which he recalled the circumstances of Shelley's death and cremation, quickened his wish to escape from a land in which he had sinned and suffered much. But the strongest of all his motives for clearing out of Italy was his desire to get away from Teresa Guiccioli, and to be quit of an alliance which he had never meant to be anything more than a temporary arrangement, and which, now that the Countess irked and bored and fretted him, was nothing better than a vexatious and unendurable entanglement.

The Countess Guiccioli persuaded Moore to believe, or at least persuaded him to represent, that Byron left her in Italy, because the unsettled state of Greece rendered it an unsuitable country for her to reside in. Probably this was the poet's pretext for requiring her

to remain in her native land, whilst he followed his fate in scenes dear to him from early manhood. But there is often a wide difference between the real reason and fair pretext for a decision. The unsettled state of South America did not preclude him from meaning to take her thither in his company, when he was in a better humour with her and was meditating an expedition without any purpose, that would be defeated by her presence at his side. Though there was war in Greece, whither he had no intention of going directly from Genoa, tranquillity reigned in the Ionian Islands, where he meant to linger and loiter, whilst gleaningsure and sufficient information about the men and parties engaged in the struggle for emancipation; and had not his passion for the Italian lady completely burnt itself out, she would have been permitted to accompany him to the Islands,—would have partaken of the festivities at Argostoli, joined in the excursion to Ithaca, and shared the poet's cottage at Metaxata. In that case, instead of making the voyage from Genoa to Cephalonia in the lumbering 'Hercules,' that had no accommodation for a lady, Byron would have sailed thither in the 'Bolivar'—the yacht that had been built for him, during his stay at Pisa, when he was playing with a project for an expedition to Bolivar's country, with Teresa for his fellow-voyager. In Grecian waters, where he would sail within view from the windows of London drawing-rooms,—where his movements would be reported in every English newspaper—where he wished to figure in the way that might dispose Lady Byron to send him the miniature he had so recently solicited, nothing was further from Byron's purpose, than to have the notorious

Teresa hanging on his arm in every port at which he might touch. Truth to tell, she would have been a more embarrassing fellow-voyager in the Ionian Islands where the wives of English residents would probably have declined to receive her, than in Greece where the main difficulty would have been to find her a safe and comfortable asylum. In selling the 'Bolivar' to Lord Blessington for a song (of four hundred guineas), and determining to make the voyage to the Islands in the 'Hercules,' with his horses and freight of arms and munitions, Byron's main object was probably to put an end to the harassing entreaties of the lady whom he was determined to leave behind him.

Writing during the Marquise de Boissy's life, after speaking contemptuously but none too lightly of the lady's 'Recollections of Lord Byron,' Dr. Elze recommended her 'to take steps for the publication of Byron's correspondence with herself, and of the letters of her brother Pietro written while he was in Greece.' It can scarcely be doubted that the correspondence would have been published before this advice was given, had the correspondence been calculated to sustain the lady's flattering view of her relation and services to the poet, who lived long enough to make her see his purpose of throwing her over, even as he had dismissed Claire. Moreover, though Moore avers (on the lady's authority) that Byron wrote 'frequently but briefly' to Teresa after leaving Italy, there are grounds for a strong opinion that the letters were more brief than frequent. That they were cold and unloverlike epistles may be inferred from the extracts from three of them, printed in Moore's 'Life:' for of

course Madame Guiccioli gave the biographer the passages that were most eloquent of the writer's devotion to the receiver of the epistles. Here are the three specimens of the way in which Byron wrote from Cephalonia to the lady who (according to Moore) was the only woman he ever really loved, with the single exception of Mary Chaworth :—

(1) ‘October 7 [1823].

‘Pietro has told you all the gossip of the island, —our earthquakes, our politics, and present abode in a pretty village. As his opinions and mine on the Greeks are nearly similar, I need say little on that subject. I was a fool to come here ; but, being here, I must see what is to be done.’

What a contrast between these frigid lines and the effusions Byron used to send his Teresa from Venice! If it be pleaded that the poet had his hands full of momentous affairs, when he deputed Pietro Gamba to give his sister ‘the gossip of the island,’ let it be remembered how Napoleon during the fierce agitations and innumerable distractions of his campaigns wrote the tenderest of love-letters to Josephine. Moreover, let it be borne in mind that, instead of thinking him engrossed by affairs, the Marquise de Boissy thought Byron had leisure for writing successive cantos of ‘Don Juan’ and copious additions to the ‘Memoirs,’ during his residence in Cephalonia.

(2) ‘October — [1823].

‘We are still in Cephalonia, waiting for news of a more accurate description ; for all is contradiction and division in the reports of the state of the Greeks.

I shall fulfil the object of my mission from the Committee, and then return into Italy ; for it does not seem likely that, as an individual, I can be of use to them ;—at least no other foreigner has yet appeared to be so, nor does it seem likely that any will be at present. Pray be as cheerful and tranquil as you can ; and be assured that there is nothing here that can excite anything but a wish to be with you again, —though we are very kindly treated by the English here of all descriptions. Of the Greeks, I can't say much good hitherto, and I do not like to speak ill of them, though they do so of one another.'

Again what a contrast to the letters he wrote her in the summer and autumn of 1819 ! Instead of hungering and thirsting for her presence and the music of her voice, he cannot even say unequivocally that he wishes to be with her again. All he can aver in that direction is that he has seen no woman in Cephalonia capable of inspiring him with any other wish,—no woman of whom Teresa should be jealous.

(3) '*October 29 [1823].*

'You may be sure the moment I can join you again will be as welcome to me as at any period of our recollection. There is nothing very attractive here to divide my attention ; but I must attend to the Greek cause, both from honour and inclination. Messrs. B—— and T—— are both in the Morea, where they have been very well received, and both of them write in good spirits and hopes. I am anxious to hear how the Spanish cause will be arranged, as I think it may have an influence on the Greek contest.

I wish that both were fairly and favourably settled, that I might return to Italy, and talk over with you *our*, or rather Pietro's adventures, some of which are rather amusing, as also some of the incidents of our voyages and travels. But I reserve them, in the hope that we may laugh over them together at no very distant period.'

Something less frigid ! But what luke-warmth for the sensitive, ardent, impetuous Byron, when writing to the only woman he ever really loved, with the single exception of Mary Chaworth ! The moment of their reunion will be as welcome to him as any moment of their liaison ; there is no beauty, amongst the belles of the island, 'to divide his attention ;' and he anticipates joining with Teresa in laughing over her brother's adventures ! But he does not trouble himself to describe any of these adventures, for the mitigation of her melancholy, during her lord's absence. With what a heavy heart must Teresa have put away these cold and unfeeling notes (after wetting them with her tears) by the side of the epistles he wrote her, in the days when he loved her —after a fashion ! The notes were all the colder to her because they were not written in *her* native Italian (the language of which he had so perfect a mastery), but in *his* native English of which she knew so little, that she could not get at the purport of the brief letters without the help of a dictionary. It is curiously indicative of Byron's purpose to Teresa that he thus wrote to her in English from Cephalonia. Never before (with a single exception) had he written to her in English. In her absence from the city,

whilst dallying with his passion at Bologna he wrote the memorable love-letter (on the fly-leaf of one of her favourite books)—in English, so that she might not understand a word of it. In Cephalonia, whilst soothing his conscience by writing her a few civil and faintly amatory sentences, he again wrote to her in English,—so that the little love of the epistles should waste by translation and fade almost to nothing, ere her mind could apprehend it. At the same time, for his own comfort or Pietro Gamba's contentment, Byron used now and then to put a few words (whether they were English or Italian, does not appear) into the letters which Teresa received from her affectionate brother, who seems to have done his best to keep his sister in Byron's memory.

Whilst he was in familiar intercourse with the Blessingtons at Genoa, Byron was in correspondence with the Committee that had been formed in London to aid the Greeks in their efforts for the emancipation of their country. By a letter, dated from London on 14 March, 1823, though from some postal delay it did not come to his hands till the twentieth of the ensuing May, Byron was told that he had been elected a member of the London Greek Committee, whose agent (Mr., Captain, or General Blaquière as he is diversely styled in private letters and published literature) was on his way to Greece (for the purpose of gathering information respecting the affairs of the country), with instructions to touch at Genoa, in order to confer with the poet. On April 5, 1823, just five days after making the acquaintance of Lord and Lady Blessington, Byron wrote to Blaquière, inviting him to Casa Saluzzi in the following terms :



*Albaro, April 5, 1823.*

‘DEAR SIR,—I shall be delighted to see you and your Greek friend, and the sooner the better. I have been expecting you for some time,—you will find me at home. I cannot express to you how much I feel interested in the cause, and nothing but the hopes I entertained of witnessing the liberation of Italy itself prevented me long ago from returning to do what little I could, as an individual, in that land which it is an honour even to have visited.

‘Ever yours truly,  
‘NOEL BYRON.’

On the twelfth of the following month, after being for six weeks in possession of the intelligence of the London Committee’s letter that came to his hands on the twentieth of May, Byron wrote the letter published in Moore’s ‘Life,’ beginning with

*Genoa, May 12, 1823.*

‘SIR,—I have great pleasure in acknowledging your letter, and the honour which the Committee have done me :—I shall endeavour to deserve their confidence by every means in my power. My first wish is to go up into the Levant in person, where I might be enabled to advance, if not the cause, at least the means of obtaining information which the Committee might be desirous of acting upon ; and my former residence in the country, my familiarity with the Italian language (which is there universally spoken, or at least to the same extent as French in the more polished parts of the Continent), and my *not* total ignorance of the Romaic, would afford me

some advantages of experience. To this project the only objection is of a domestic nature, and I shall try to get over it ;—if I fail in this, I must do what I can where I am ; but it will be always a source of regret to me, to think that I might perhaps have done more for the cause on the spot.'

Whilst they afford a precise statement of the service he felt himself capable of rendering the Committee, these words are also especially interesting for the indication that Teresa Guiccioli (the only person in a position to make 'the only objection of a domestic nature') was using all her failing influence to withhold the poet from an honourable enterprise. Referring again to the possibility that this influence would prevent him from going to Greece, and at the same time indicating the magnitude of the pecuniary aid he was prepared to render the cause, in case he should overcome the domestic obstacle, Byron wrote in the same long letter, 'The principal material wanted by the Greeks appears to be, first, a park of field artillery—light and fit for mountain service ; secondly, gunpowder ; thirdly, hospital or medical stores. The readiest mode of transmission is, I hear, by Idra, addressed to Mr. Negri, the minister. I meant to send up a certain quantity of the two latter—no great deal—but enough for an individual to show his good wishes for the Greek success,—but am pausing, because, in case I should go myself, I can take them with me. I do not want to limit my own contribution to this merely, but more especially, if I can get to Greece myself, I should devote whatever resources I can muster of my own, to advancing the great object.'

On the 7th of July, 1823, the poet (turned ‘man of action’) wrote to Mr. Bowring, ‘We sail on the 12th for Greece. I have had a letter from Mr. Blaquièrè, too long for present transcription, but very satisfactory. The Greek Government expects me without delay. In conformity to the desires of Mr. B. and other correspondents in Greece, I have to suggest, with all deference to the Committee, that a remittance of even “*ten thousand pounds only*” (Mr. B.’s expression) would be of the greatest service to the Greek Government at present. I have also to recommend strongly the attempt of a loan, for which there will be offered a sufficient security by deputies now on their way to England. In the meantime, I hope the Committee will be enabled to do something effectual. For my own part, I mean to carry up, in cash or credits, above eight, and nearly 9,000*l.* sterling, which I am enabled to do by funds I have in Italy, and credits in England. Of this sum I must necessarily reserve a portion for the subsistence of myself and suite; the rest I am willing to apply in the manner which seems most likely to be useful to the cause—having of course some guarantee or assurance, that it will not be misapplied to any individual speculation. If I remain in Greece, which will mainly depend upon the presumed probable utility of my presence there, and of the opinion of the Greeks themselves as to its propriety—in short, if I am welcome to them, I shall continue, during my residence at least, to apply such portions of my income, present and future, as may forward the object—that is to say, what I can spare for that purpose. Privations I can, or at least could once

bear—abstinence I am accustomed to—and as to fatigue, I was once a tolerable traveller. What I may be now, I cannot tell—but I will try.’ Now that he had entered upon his share of the Wentworth revenue, Byron’s income may be computed at between 6000*l.* and 7000*l.* a-year. The occasion having come for spending his hoarded money (to be computed at about 9000*l.* or 10,000*l.*), Byron was prepared to spend it in a way to redeem his honour from imputations of ignoble niggardliness ; provided he could see his way to spending it effectually for the two ends he had in view,—the success of a cause, that had his sincere though cold approval ; and the attainment of distinction that, whilst satisfying or at least gratifying his appetite for glory, would atone to human judgment for the errors of his youth.

Between the date of Blaquièrè’s visit to him at Albaro (April 5, 1823) and the date of this last-mentioned letter to Bowring (July 7, 1823), Byron experienced alternations of confidence and despondency, resoluteness and vacillation. To-day hopeful of Greece and the part he should play for her emancipation, he was possessed on the morrow by gloomy anticipations for the country and dismal presentiments of disaster to himself from the enterprise. On May 26, 1823, Captain Roberts wrote from Genoa to Trelawny, ‘Between you and me, I think there is small chance of Byron’s going to Greece ; as I think from the wavering manner in which he speaks of it ; he said the other day, “Well, Captain, if we do not go to Greece, I am determined to go somewhere, and hope we shall be at sea together by next month, as I am tired of this place, the shore and all the people

on it.” On the evening (June 1, 1823) before the Blessingtons left Genoa, the poet was sitting on a sofa by the side of Lady Blessington in the presence of several persons, when he remarked with a voice and air of overpowering sadness, ‘Here we are all now together—but when and where shall we meet again? I have a sort of boding that we see each other now for the last time; as something tells me I shall never again return from Greece;’ the melancholy utterance being followed by one of those womanish fits of hysterical weeping to which he was liable in certain moods of violent agitation at every period of his life. Resting his head on an arm of the sofa, he sobbed, as his tears fell, like a schoolgirl, before he recovered enough self-command to make a jest of what he called his ‘nervousness.’ Distributing farewell gifts amongst the party—a book to one, a print of his bust by Bartolini to another—he gave Lady Blessington a pin from his breast, a gift which he recalled on the morrow, replacing it with a gold chain of Venetian manufacture. ‘My dear Lady Blessington,’ he wrote in the first paragraph of a letter that came to the lady’s hands on the day of her departure from Genoa, ‘I am *superstitious*, and have recollected that memorials with a *point* are of less fortunate augury; I will, therefore, request you to accept, instead of the pin, the enclosed chain, which is of so slight a value that you need not hesitate.’—This passage of weakness was followed by one of comparative buoyancy and fortitude, during which he went on board several vessels with Captain Roberts, for the purpose of choosing a suitable ship for the voyage. ‘Byron,’ the captain wrote to Tre-

lawny, on June 5, 1823, 'has sold the "Bolivar" to Lord Blessington for four hundred guineas, and is determined to go to Greece; he says, whilst he was in doubt, fearing it might prove no reality, he did not like to bring you here; now, he wishes much to see you to have your opinion as to what steps it will be most necessary to take.' Then came the fit of vacillation that caused Mrs. Shelley so late as June 9, 1823, to write to Trelawny, 'Lord Byron says, that as he has not heard from Greece, his going there is uncertain: but if he does go, he is extremely desirous that you should join him.' Six days later with an accession of resoluteness, Byron wrote to Trelawny, to come to him quickly, as he had at last made up his mind to go to Greece, 'the only place he ever was contented in.' It is noteworthy that the poet excuses himself for not writing sooner, because his indecision made him fearful of giving his friend 'a journey for nothing.' He adds, 'They all say I can be of use in Greece. I do not know how, nor do they; but at all events let us go.'

It does not appear that Byron ever thought again of drawing back from the collar, after bringing his shoulder up to it, in this faint-hearted way. Before the 23rd of June he had hired the 'Hercules,' the rocking, rolling, collier-built tub of 120 tons, at whose manifest deficiencies Trelawny grumbled to no purpose, whilst Byron observed smilingly, 'They say I have got her on easy terms,'—a consideration that afforded no contentment to the Cornish adventurer who was not the paymaster. Trelawny having appeared on the scene, matters moved towards the end in view. Horse-boxes for five animals (Tre-

lawnny's *one*, and Byron's *four*) were knocked together by the contractor who 'scamped his work,' to the subsequent inconvenience of the voyagers; the arms and ammunition, with the 'Bolivar's' two one-pounders and a year's supply of medicines for a thousand men, were stowed away. The horses had been shipped; Byron's suite (as Moore grandly styles Pietro Gamba, Trelawny, Bruno the Italian doctor who had never seen practice, and five or six men-servants) had embarked; the poet, with his ten thousand crowns in specie and his forty thousand crowns in bills of exchange, was afloat; in short, everything but the breeze was ready for a beginning of the voyage on July 13, 1823,—at the close of which day the adventurers slept on board the 'Hercules.'

Moore's account of Byron's departure contains some curious examples of the inaccuracy too often discoverable in personal histories. According to the biographer, Byron and his companions, after passing the night in their berths, cleared the port at sunrise of the 14th of July, when from want of wind they remained in sight of Genoa the whole day; the dead calm of the previous four-and-twenty hours being followed by a night of serious danger. The moon shone full and clear, but the wind was violent and adverse. Remaining on deck during the storm, Byron, 'with the aid of such of his suite as were not disabled by sea-sickness,' busied himself in preserving the horses which had broken loose and injured each other. 'After making head against the wind for four hours, the captain' (the biographer continues) 'was at last obliged to steer back to Genoa, and re-

entered the port at six in the morning,' when the poet, on relanding to pass the day (July 15th) on shore, 'appeared thoughtful, and remarked that he considered a bad beginning a favourable omen.' The day of July 15th, spent by the carpenters in repairing the damages done to the vessel, was spent by Byron in a visit to the Casa Saluzzi, which the Countess Guiccioli had left a few hours earlier, and in a visit to 'some gardens near the city,' where he spoke with equal freedom and sadness to his friend Barry, the Genoese banker,—regretting that he had not decided to go to England instead of Greece, and in his hopelessness for an enterprise, that had commenced so inauspiciously, declaring that 'nothing but a devoted sense of duty and honour prevented him from relinquishing his rash purpose at the last moment.' In the evening of the same day (the 15th of July), having again set sail, Byron soon recovered his spirits and went merrily over the wide waters. 'In the breeze,' says Moore, 'that now bore him towards his beloved Greece, the voice of his youth seemed again to speak. Before the titles of hero, of benefactor, to which he now aspired, that of poet, however pre-eminent, faded into nothing. His love of freedom, his generosity, his thirst for the new and adventurous,—all were re-awakened; and even the bodings that still lingered at the bottom of his heart but made the course before him more precious from his consciousness of its brevity, and from the high and self-ennobling resolution he had now taken to turn what yet remained of it gloriously to account.' Moore is comically wrong in most of the statements of this bit of melodramatic story. Byron did not spend the



14th of July in the offing, within sight of Genoa, but spent the day on shore. He did not pass the night of the 14th at sea, but either in bed on shore or in a motionless berth in harbour. He did not distinguish himself by activity in a storm off Genoa; the 'Hercules' was not damaged by a storm;—there was no storm to injure the vessel, or afford the poet an occasion for displaying his intrepidity in danger, and the singular steadiness of his lame feet on a rocking deck. Instead of re-landing at six a.m. on the 15th of July he was just then towed out of port by American boats. Instead of spending the 15th of July at the Casa Saluzzi and 'some gardens near the city' he spent it at sea. Instead of re-landing *once* only, he returned to shore *twice*, after sleeping on board the 'Hercules.'

Dissatisfied in this matter with the personal historian, to whose imagination she was indebted for so many of her facts, to whose pages she was indebted for nine-tenths of her anecdotes about Byron, the Marquise de Boissy heightens the dramatic interest and multiplies the romantic incidents of Moore's sufficiently sensational account of the poet's departure from Genoa. Not content with a single imaginary storm, the lady insists there were two on successive nights. 'It is also known how,' she says (*vide* 'My Recollections.' Vol. II. pp. 34, 35), 'being driven back into port by a storm, he resolved on visiting the palace of Albaro; and it may well be imagined that the hours passed in this dwelling, then silent and deserted, must have seemed like those that count as years of anguish in the life of great and feeling souls, among whom visions of the future float before the

over-excited mind . . . . The night which followed this gloomy day again saw Lord Byron struggling against stormy waves, and not only determined on pursuing his voyage, but also on appearing calm and serene to his fellow-travellers.' On page 93 of the same volume, the storm that 'drove' rises to the 'tempest that cast him back.' 'When hardly out of port from Genoa,' says the aged Teresa, 'a tempest cast him back. He landed, and resolved on visiting the abode he had left in such anguish the day before. While climbing the hill of Albaro the darkest presentiment took possession of his soul. "Where shall we be this day next year?" said he to Count Gamba, who was walking by his side.'

The simple facts of the departure are these. The horses having been shipped and all the freight of the 'Hercules' put on board by the evening of the 13th of July, Byron (with his 'suite,' *i.e.* Pietro Gamba, the unfledged medical student Bruno, Fletcher the valet, Lega the secretary, and three or four stablemen) and Trelawny (with his 'suite' of a single negro) slept on board, after going to their berths with the hope that at daybreak they would be starting for Leghorn. On the morning of the 14th, there being no breath of wind to move the lumbering ship onwards, the poet and his party went on shore for the day. Weighing anchor at daylight on the 15th, the 'Hercules' with the full complement of adventurers was towed out of the bay by boats sent, in complaisance to the poet, by American ships to render him that service. The calm continuing, the 'Hercules' lay all day in the offing 'like a log upon the main under the broiling sun; the Italians skipping

about, gesticulating, and chattering like wild monkeys in a wood,' whilst (*vide* Trelawny's capital book) 'the Pilgrim sat apart, solemn and sad,' taking no notice of anyone or anything. Freshening towards midnight, the sea-breeze tumbled the waters, and rose so much that it was necessary to shorten sail, when the no longer nimble and vociferous Italians had crept off to their holes and corners, to enjoy the sickness of the occasion. At this crisis the horses, ill secured and frightened by the vessel's motion, kicked down the flimsy partitions, and would probably have lashed out with their heels at one another, had not Trelawny and *his* 'suite' (the negro) looked after the animals. The poet—with tottering legs on *terra firma*, and no legs at all on a rocking deck—could of course only thank Trelawny for the timely service, in which he could not share. 'We must bear up for port or we shall lose our cattle!' said the Cornish gentleman, who in no proper sense of the word was one of his friend's 'suite.' 'Do as you like,' was Byron's answer;—the four monosyllables being the whole of his contribution to the measure for abating a difficulty, that might have resulted in harm to the horses, but never for an instant put the ship in danger. The 'Hercules' sustained no damage from the gale, which only raised Trelawny's spirits; and had it not been for the necessity of reconstructing the horse-boxes, the ship would have gone onwards to Leghorn. Having enjoyed his laughter at the doleful appearance of those of his land-lubbers, who had made the most of the opportunity for turning sick, Byron, after re-entering harbour, went on shore, for the *second time*, whilst the

helpful Trelawny went to work with two or three English carpenters, and in a few hours put up sufficient boxes. 'In the evening' (of July 16th), says Trelawny, 'we took a fresh departure, and, *the weather continuing fine*, we had no other delay than that which arose from the bad sailing qualities of our vessel.'—So much for Moore's 'storm' and 'Teresa's 'tempest.'

Moore calls attention to the fact (?) that, notwithstanding his superstitious dislike of Friday as an unlucky day, the poet—who would not make a first call upon a new acquaintance on Friday, for fear of the consequences, and from the same motive returned upon the hands of a Genoese tailor the coat which the tradesman delivered on the inauspicious day—set sail for Greece on a Friday. As he was in error respecting the day of the month, possibly Moore was also mistaken respecting the particular day of the week, on which the 'Hercules' eventually began her voyage to Greek waters. Anyhow folk-lore was so far discredited by the event, that the biographer might as well have been silent about the matter. Whatever the day of its commencement, the voyage of the 'Hercules' (to Cephalaria), though tedious, was fairly fortunate.

Making some twenty miles in the twenty-four hours, the torpid craft came in five days to Leghorn, where Mr. Hamilton Browne and two Greeks (suspected of being spies) joined the party, whilst the vessel was taking in gunpowder and English goods. Clearing out of Leghorn on the 24th—the day on which Byron received the verses from Goethe and wrote the German poet a prompt acknowledgment of

the courtesy—the ‘*Hercules*’ proceeded to the Ionian Isles by an irregular course, in order that Byron, who had never seen a volcanic mountain, might enlarge his observation of natural phenomena at Stromboli. But nature declined to satisfy the curiosity of the poet, though he lay off the island for a whole night, looking in vain towards the volcano for an emission of fire. On nearing Greek waters it was matter of debate with the principal voyagers, whether they should go to Zante, where Byron expected to find Blaquièrè, or to Cephalonia where there was a governor favourable to the Greek cause; the question being eventually decided in accordance with the advice of Hamilton Browne who, speaking from his knowledge of the Ionian Islands and their residents, was urgent that the ‘*Hercules*’ should make for Argostoli. The choice was fortunate. At Zante the voyagers would not have met Blaquièrè, who had started for England without awaiting Byron’s arrival. Lying off Cephalonia, they enjoyed the sympathy of an English circle whose members vied with one another in showing respect for the poet, and also of a Governor (Colonel, afterwards Sir C. J. Napier) who was disposed to further their objects to the utmost of an ability, that was limited by official obligations.

## CHAPTER VII.

## CEPHALONIA.

Byron's Delight at seeing Greece again—Blaquière's Departure for England—The Voyage from Leghorn to Argostoli—The Poet's Demeanour on board the 'Hercules'—His alternate Sadness and Hilarity—His Gossip with Trelawny—King of Greece—William Parry—The Excursion to Ithaca—Shattered Nerves and Broken Health—Byron's Life at Metaxata—His Disputations with Dr. Kennedy—His Motives for lingering in Cephalonia—Policy and Indolence.

LEAVING Leghorn (where the 'Hercules' stayed for two days, taking in gunpowder and other stores) on July 24, 1823, when he was well within nine months of his death, Byron sighted Cephalonia and Zante on the 2nd of August. Shortly after he had viewed the islands, the adventurer, pointing towards the Morea, said to Trelawny, 'I don't know why it is, but I feel as if the eleven long years of bitterness I have passed through since I was here were taken off my shoulders, and I was scudding through the Greek Archipelago with old Bathurst, in his frigate.' Anchoring in the roadstead for the night, the 'Hercules' entered the harbour of Argostoli on the following morning. On learning that Blaquière without awaiting his arrival, in accordance with their arrangement and the requirements of courtesy, was on his way back to England, Byron could not conceal his vexation. 'Now, they have got me thus far,' he exclaimed bitterly to Trelawny in reference to the London

Committee, 'they think I must go on, and they care nothing as to the result. They are deceived. I won't budge a foot further until I see my way ; we will stay here ; if that is objected to, I will buy an island from the Greeks or Turks ; there must be plenty of them in the market.'

For the particulars of the voyage from Genoa to Cephalonia, the readers of this memoir should refer to Trelawny's 'Records,'—perhaps the most interesting and suggestive of all the numerous books about the poet. In the earlier stage of the voyage (from Genoa to Leghorn), Byron, unusually silent and serious, with a countenance indicative of strenuous effort to conceal melancholy emotion, passed his time chiefly on deck at the stern of the vessel, sometimes occupied with his own anxious thoughts, sometimes reading Scott's 'Life of Swift,' Colonel Hippesley's 'Expedition to South America,' Grimm's 'Correspondence,' or Rochefoucauld. The fellow-voyagers messed on deck, and most of them slept on deck. At Leghorn the poet was provided with more literature,—English newspapers and reviews, and the recently published first volume of Las Cases' 'Memoirs of Napoleon.' After leaving Leghorn he suffered even more visibly from dejection than in the earlier days of sailing. 'It was not,' says Trelawny, 'until we had been some days fairly at sea, with no land to look back upon, that the Pilgrim regained something of his self-command.'

Suffering nothing from the motion of the vessel, that rocked and rolled in its tardy progress as though it had been 'built to roll,' he improved gradually in health and spirits till he could say to his most familiar comrade, 'I am better now than I have been for years.'

Daily at noon he went overboard for a long swim, the one and favourite muscular exercise in which he could compete with his fellows on equal terms. 'It was the only exercise he had, for he could not walk on deck,' Trelawny says of the man, who is described by the most imaginative of his historians as running about on board and tackling unruly horses during a violent gale. Every day he played with his pistols, firing at empty bottles and live poultry (notwithstanding his old vow never again to shoot a bird). Once and again, he and Trelawny and the brig's captain whiled away the time with ghost stories and superstitious tales of strange presentiments. There were times of elation when he laughed heartily and perpetrated practical jokes that made the sailors roar with glee till their sides cracked. For instance, whilst the big-bellied captain was taking his midday nap, Byron got possession of the seaman's bright scarlet waistcoat, and induced Trelawny to join him in trying whether the gorgeous piece of raiment could not be made to hold both of them at the same time. 'Now,' he cried with a schoolboy's boisterous hilarity, 'put your arm in, Tre, and we will jump overboard, and take the shine out of it.' Coming on deck in time to see his splendid garment thus dishonoured by the 'Siamese swimmers,' to the riotous delight of the shouting crew, Captain Scott (given to talk of his freight as '*frite*') exclaimed passionately, 'My Lord, you should know better than to make a mutiny on board ship. I won't heave to, or lower a boat. I hope you'll both be drowned.' To which threat Byron cried out from the water, 'Then you'll lose your *frite*!'—a reminder that doubtless made the



captain of the 'Hercules' more careful for his freight than his waistcoat. But such exhibitions of gaiety were the occasional breaks of sunshine in a gloomy April. Even in these passages of joyousness the poet was likely at any instant to drop away to despondency and the weakness of womanish grief. 'I often saw Lord Byron during his last voyage from Genoa to Greece,' Hamilton Browne wrote to Colonel Stanhope, 'in the midst of the greatest gaiety suddenly become pensive, and his eyes fill with tears, doubtless from some painful remembrance. On these occasions he generally got up and retired to the solitude of his cabin.' During these last months of his existence, Byron's eyes often revealed the sorrow that combined with bodily sickness to kill him. Even as Hamilton Browne saw him weep on board the 'Hercules,' Colonel Stanhope (afterwards Lord Harrington) often saw Byron at Missolonghi pass in a moment from the gaiety of light speech to the tears of untold misery. But alike in gloom and gladness, in his meditative moods and his fits of dejection, Byron was remarkable throughout the voyage for the qualities that commend a traveller to the kindly regard of his associates. 'I never,' Trelawny says emphatically, 'was on shipboard with a better companion than Byron; he was generally cheerful, gave no trouble, assumed no authority, uttered no complaints, and did not interfere with the working of the ship; when appealed to he always answered, "Do as you like."'

Though a chief, if not the main, purpose of his expedition to Greece was to show the world that he could do better things than make verses, there were occasions of the passage from Leghorn to Argostoli

when, notwithstanding his avowals that he had done with literature, and his petulant expressions of dislike to being reminded of his literary celebrity, he spoke as though he would return to writing when he had done fighting. When he broke down, like a schoolboy set an impossible task, in his endeavour to 'perpetuate his verses on Tyranny,' at Trelawny's request, as they were slipping past the dungeons of Lonza, he observed, 'Give me time,—I can't forget the theme; but for this Greek business I should have been at Naples, writing a fifth canto of "*Childe Harold*," expressly to give vent to my detestation of the Austrian tyranny in Italy.' Subsequently he acted on Trelawny's suggestion that he should write a war-song for the Greeks;—producing the lost song that was seen after his death amongst his papers at Missolonghi by Trelawny, who made his lost copy of the verses at the same time when he made his published copy of the poet's last (unfinished) letter to his sister. After laying all night off Stromboli, watching for the fire which declined to show itself, the poet said to the same companion, 'If I live another year, you will see this scene in a fifth canto of "*Childe Harold*."' And weeks later, when Trelawny started from Cephalonia for the Morea, Byron's parting words to him were, 'Let me hear from you often,—come back soon. If things are farcical, they will do for "*Don Juan*;" if heroical, you shall have another canto of "*Childe Harold*."' But of all Byron's talk at sea about his literary doings the most noteworthy utterances were those that relate to what may be termed the egotistic mystifications of his personal story, that are so peculiar a feature of his writings;—more espe-

cially the utterances that relate to the 'Dream' and the poems to 'Thyrza.' 'People say,' he observed to Trelawny, 'that I have told my own story in my writings: I defy them to point out a single act of my life by my poems, or even of my thoughts, for I seldom write what I think.' Of the 'Dream' he said, 'There is some truth as to detail in the "Dream," and in some of my shorter poems.' That there is much untruth as to the detail and main facts of the 'Dream' has been already shown in these pages. Respecting the poems to 'Thyrza,' he said, 'When I first left England I was gloomy. I said so in my first canto of "Childe Harold." I was then really in love with a cousin' ['Thyrza,' Trelawny remarks parenthetically, 'he was very chary of her name'], 'and she was in a decline.' On examining them with reference to what has been said about Thyrza in a former chapter, the reader will observe that, though they obscured the precise facts to Trelawny and were probably intended to mystify them and him, these words were consistent with the truth. In leaving England for the first time, Byron was in love with Margaret Parker in the manner set forth in that chapter. Margaret Parker, dead for years before the poet's first departure from England, *was* in a decline even to her death,—and to the poet's fancy *was* in decline, long after she was resting in the grave.—The Greek Expedition was fruitful of three interesting confessions for Byronic biographers; (1) the poet's confession that Thyrza was a cousin who died of consumption; (2) his avowal that the 'Dream' was truthful only in some of its details; and (3) his admission, made in Cephalonia, that he

knew the reasons of his wife's resolve to part from him,—the reasons that were too simple to be readily discovered.

Byron's German biographer, Karl Elze, calls it 'a painful and undeniable truth,' that the poet's 'taking part in the work of the liberation of Greece did not so much arise from enthusiasm, or from a lofty impulse for liberty, or from a deeply-rooted sympathy with the sufferings of the Greek people, still less from self-sacrificing courage, as from personal and by no means ideal feelings.' As he had come to the middle of his thirty-sixth year before sailing from Genoa, and had led a life peculiarly calculated to exhaust the generous sympathies, it would have been strange had the poet embarked for Greece in obedience to sentiments, that are seldom strongly operative in men who have survived the illusions and romantic hopefulness of youth. Instead of lamenting the absence of feelings, not to be looked for in a battered and embittered worldling of middle age and broken health, the biographer should rather have extolled the bravery that animated such a man to engage in an enterprise, requiring all the energies of his earlier and undiminished vigour. Other things might be urged to his credit respecting the frame of mind in which he started for Greece, and of his objects in an expedition so unsuited to his failing energies. Though recollections of former felicity caused him to regard Greece with a peculiar fondness, he had little liking and no respect for the people. 'I am of St. Paul's opinion,' he said, 'that there is no difference between the Jews and Greeks, the character of both being equally vile.' But though he regarded the Greeks thus disdainfully, their cause had his

sincere approval; and whilst he nursed a far from sanguine hope for the cause, he believed that its triumph would in course of time have beneficial consequences in the condition and character of the people. In the contemplation of these consequences, there were moments when he could rise superior to selfish aims, and exclaim with sincerity, 'What signifies Self, if a single spark of that which would be worthy of the past can be bequeathed unquenchedly to the future.' In bare justice to a man, whose conspicuous failings were associated with conspicuous virtues, it must be admitted that no prospect of individual aggrandisement could ever have induced Byron to join in any battle which he believed to be a battle for the wrong,—or in any battle which he did not conscientiously think a battle for the right. Grateful to the land, that had inspired his genius at manhood's threshold and made him famous, he wished to repay the debt he owed to her story and natural loveliness by being of service to her degenerate people. At the same time he was moved by a desire for the glory that would purge his fame of the stains put upon it by evil behaviour, and would be accepted in England as a perfect atonement for all he had ever done to her displeasure. 'Like all men educated as he had been,' says the well-informed writer (Bowring) of the article on 'Lord Byron in Greece,' that appeared in the 'Westminster Review' soon after the poet's death, 'Lord Byron too often probably obeyed the dictates of impulse, and threw up the reins to passion which he had never been taught the necessity of governing; but the world are under a grievous mistake if they fancy that Lord Byron embarked for Greece with the ignorant

ardour of a schoolboy, or the flighty fanaticism of a crusader. *It appeared to him that there was a good chance of his being useful in a country which he loved—a field of honourable distinction was open to him*, and doubtless he expected to derive no mean gratification from witnessing so singular and instructive a spectacle as the emancipation of Greece.’ It follows that, in respect to the motives which actuated him towards Greece, Byron is less comparable with those few and sublime Liberators whose services to the victims of oppression proceeded from enthusiastic and absolutely disinterested devotion to Freedom, than with those royal Pretenders who in fighting for a crown have been animated by selfish as well as philanthropic motives.

There is another reason for rating him with the noble candidates for dynastic eminence, rather than with the sublimely unselfish Liberators to whom he was likened by his fervid eulogists in the times following closely on his death. For if he did not embark at Genoa with a hope that the expedition, on which he started with scanty information and indefinite views, would make him the sovereign of Free Greece, it is certain that either during the passage from Leghorn to Cephalonia, or at the latest soon after his arrival at Argostoli, the hope had a place in his view of the possible consequences of the revolution. Reference has been already made to the two Greeks who joined the party on board the ‘Hercules’ at Leghorn—Prince Shilizzi, suspected of being a Russian spy, and Captain Vitaili, of whom it was rumoured that he was a spy in the service of the Porte. On learning the rumours respecting his guests for the passage to the Ionian Islands, Byron remarked lightly, ‘And a fair

sample too of the ancient as well as the modern, if Mitford is to be believed.' By these two Greeks, whose dubious fame caused him so little concern, Byron was assured that most of the Greeks favoured monarchical government; and it is probable that the poet was indebted to their wily lips for his first pleasant fancy that the people, so wishful for a king, might invite him to be their sovereign—that he might exchange his coronet for a crown, and through Ada become the founder of a line of kings. Once offered to his mind, the flattering thought would not fail to fascinate his imagination, and be fruitful of pleasant and even intoxicating anticipations. At Cephalonia he was also assured that the Greeks needed and wished for a king, whose influence would unite the chiefs, and give solidarity to a nation made up of tribes, that ever at fierce feud amongst themselves had no common sentiment but vindictive hatred of the Turk. 'If they make me the offer,' Byron observed lightly to Trelawny, either during or soon after the voyage from Leghorn, 'I may not refuse it. I shall take care of my own "sma' peculiar;" for if it don't suit my humour, I shall, like Sancho, resign.' Believing that Byron relished the suggestion, Trelawny also held a strong opinion that, had it not been for his death, the poet would have been invited to the throne of Greece. 'Byron,' says the author of the 'Records,' 'several times alluded to this in a bantering vein; it left an impression on his mind. Had he lived to reach the congress of Salona as commissioner of the loan, the dispenser of a million silver crowns would have been offered a golden one.'

There is no evidence how far Byron surrendered

himself to a dream, so certain to gratify his pride, and delight his romantic spirit. Still less is there evidence that he deliberately entertained a purpose of making himself King of Greece. But whilst it cannot be doubted that Trelawny had reasonable grounds for his strong opinion on the matter, few persons will question that had the offer been made it would have been accepted. Most persons will hold it more than probable that, though he might not have died a king, the poet would at least for a brief hour have borne the regal title and moved in kingly state, had he lived for another year. Byron's temper, his long-cherished ambition to astound the world by adventurous achievement outside literature, and the course of events in Greece, countenance this view of what was at least a possibility. It is significant to the matter that, in allying himself so closely with Prince Mavrocordatos, the poet associated himself with the chief, who was most influential with those of the Greeks who were favourably disposed to monarchy, and, at the same time, desired to have a foreigner for their king. It is (to use Dr. Elze's words) more than probable that conferences of a confidential character were held on this subject at Missolonghi. There is nothing incredible in the statement (made by the author of 'Parry's Last Days of Lord Byron') that the poet, with characteristic inability to keep his hopes altogether in his own breast and to guard all the secret purpose of his friends from discovery or at least from suspicion, ejaculated in an incautious moment to the whilom ship's carpenter, 'I have had offers that would surprise you, were I to tell you of them, and which would turn the head of any man



less satiated than I am, and more desirous of possessing power than of contributing to freedom and happiness.' The writer of the book from which these words are taken, insists that these offers (necessarily made by persons with questionable authority to make them) were rejected. Of course, Byron represented himself to have rejected them, if he was so imprudent and weak as to speak of them to the nominal author of the apocryphal memoir. But no reliance can be put on the assertions of the 'Last Days'—a vamped-up performance that was probably put together, and published by a politician, who after Byron's death aimed at forcing his own views on Grecian affairs into consideration by the aid of the poet's reputation. Originally a ship's carpenter, afterwards a fireman at the Woolwich Arsenal, subsequently a captain of Mavrocordatos's creation, a few days later a Major by virtue of his own impudence, never a man of even the slightest education, and towards the close of his by no means creditable career an insatiable brandy-drinker, William Parry—a curious and rather piquant combination of impostor, buffoon, and sot—was incapable of writing the spurious book, for which he furnished some of the materials besides the name that figures on its title-page.

Byron was as good as the petulant words that escaped his lips on hearing that Blaqui re had gone for England, instead of remaining, as he should have done, to give him the latest intelligence and fullest possible information of affairs in the Morea. 'I won't budge a foot farther until I see my way!' was the exclamation of the adventurer, who had learned the necessity for caution and precise knowledge of facts

in revolutionary enterprise, from the miscarriage of Italian Carbonarism. The words were spoken in pique, but he acted on them stubbornly. Till he saw what to do, he would do nothing but gather intelligence, and study the position by means of the emissaries of rival parties and chiefs, who would not fail to flock to him, as soon as it was known that he was at Argostoli with a cargo of arms and gunpowder, and chests full of specie. Ready to play with a heavy stake, he was determined not to place his money, without first studying the table and observing the ways of the game. And notwithstanding all that has been urged or suggested to the contrary, his resolve was a wise one alike for Greece and himself. For the moment, knowledge was what he needed. Moving without it he might commit himself to the faction that he ought to be most careful to avoid, and instead of bringing the eastern and western tribes into united action might set them by the ears. Having left Genoa, knowing no more of Greece and her affairs than was known to the members of the London Committee,—that is to say, knowing hardly anything about them,—he had arrived at the Islands with only the slightest information of the men and forces with whom he hoped to co-operate. Cephalonia would be a good place of observation. It would also be a fit station for negotiating with the Greek Government, to whom he had no intention of rendering assistance until it should be asked for. In Italy he offered his sword to the Neapolitan Government; in Greece he would not draw his sword till the Government had entreated him to do so. Arriving at Argostoli on the 3rd of August, 1823, he remained in

Cephalonia till the 28th of December—a period that wanted only six days of five calendar months ; the first five or six weeks of the term being spent chiefly on board the ‘*Hereules*’ by the adventurer who, crossing the harbour every afternoon to the rock from which he took his daily leap into the sea, went on shore every evening for horse exercise. On exchanging his narrow home on the water for roomier quarters on shore, Byron, still declining Colonel Napier’s offer of entertainment at the Residency, established himself in a house at Metaxata, a pleasant and picturesque village, some four or five miles distant from Argostoli.

Despatching messengers to Corfu and Missolonghi for information soon after his arrival at Argostoli, Byron determined to pass some of the time, that must elapse before the return of the agents, in an excursion to the island of Ithaca. Made in the company of Trelawny, Hamilton Browne, Pietro Gamba, little Dr. Bruno, together with one or two new acquaintances picked up at Cephalonia, and a few pleasure-seekers who were permitted to join the party in Ithaca, this excursion of eight days through the loveliest scenery and some of the most interesting haunts of the island, was fruitful of one or two incidents that indicate the variability of Byron’s freakish temper, and the violence that often distinguished his demeanour at moments of trivial annoyance or severe bodily discomfort. ‘*Received*’ (according to Trelawny) ‘as if he had been a prince,’ Byron was delighted with the treatment accorded him by the principal inhabitants of the island, and throwing himself with boyish hilarity into

the diversions of the progress drank and feasted at the successive banquets provided for the tourists, as though he had neither fear nor knowledge of the tortures of dyspepsia. This imprudence had of course the usual consequences on the man of irritable temper and feeble digestion. After several exhibitions of petulance he indulged in a furious fit of rage at an incident that should only have caused him amusement, and endured on the last night of the excursion one of those excruciating paroxysms of stomachic cramp, that in his later years used to make him scream and swear like a maniac. On being invited to inspect some of the localities of the island, such as Homer's School and the Stronghold of Ulysses, that are especially interesting to antiquaries, he ejaculated pettishly to Trelawny, 'Do I look like one of those emaculated fogies? Let's have a swim. I detest antiquarian twaddle. Do people think I have no lucid intervals, that I came to Greece to scribble mere nonsense? I will show them that I can do something better; I wish I had never written a line, to have it cast in my teeth at every turn.' Later in the same day, when he had taken a long swim and thoroughly fatigued himself with exertion, he fell asleep in the cave, where Ulysses is said to have deposited the presents of the Phœacians, and remained there whilst Pietro Gamba climbed to the ruins of the hero's castle,—an ascent which the poet was precluded by his lameness from making. 'I awoke him,' the Count Pietro says mildly, 'on my return, and he said that I had interrupted dreams more pleasant than ever he had before in his life.' The poet's regret for the disturbance was, however, couched in terms

less courteous than vehement. 'Gamba,' says Trelawny, 'having nothing to do, hunted him out, and awakened him from a pleasant dream, for which the poet cursed him.'

After leaving Vathi, where he ate and drank of indigestible things more than would have been for his good, had the fare been fit for his squeamish and weak stomach, he climbed (in the saddle), with the rest of his party on foot, to the summit of the hill of Athos, to sleep at a monastery, where he was received with abundant hospitality and extravagant adulation, by the chief of the religious brethren, whom Trelawny styles 'the Abbot.' Having conducted his chief guest to the great hall (illuminated for the occasion), where the poet was thronged by curious monks, whilst boys in ecclesiastical costume swung censers of burning frankincense under his nose, this dignitary of the Church, after performing divers ceremonies, was reading from a paper scroll an address of fulsome flattery to the 'Lordo Inglese,' when, to the consternation of the English spectators, no less than to the amazement of the orator in sacerdotal vestments, the Lordo, to whose glory so many extravagant things were being uttered, flew into a tempestuous rage, cursed the Abbot in vigorous Italian, and then seizing a lamp rushed with it from the chamber of audience, exclaiming to his astonished fellow-tourists, 'Will no one release me from the presence of these pestilential idiots? they drive me mad!' This outbreak was doubtless due to the attack of indigestion that, provoked by the poet's recent indiscretions in diet, had been coming upon him for some hours. From the loose notes of the two slightly discordant and

obscure eye-witnesses and historians of the evening's proceedings, it appears that before the poet went to sleep he was driven so wild by stomachic agony as to tear his clothes, and hurl oaths and furniture at those who ventured to approach him with offers of assistance. In his torture Byron filled the house of religion with riot and alarm. Driving poor little Dr. Bruno from his presence with volleys of fierce and untranslatable execrations, the victim of acute dyspepsia barricaded his chamber with chairs and a table, so that he might yell and suffer in solitude. A council was held on what should be done for the patient's relief and safety. After a brief visit to the scene of noise and disorder, Trelawny returned only to say he could do nothing for the sufferer, who seemed likely to wreck all the furniture of his room, and was so violent and strong in his frenzy that ten men would find it difficult to hold him. On forcing his way through the obstructions put against the inward side of the door, one of the historians of the affair (the author of the 'Conversations with Lord Byron,' printed as an appendix to Charles Mackay's 'Medora Leigh') saw the poet, standing half undressed in a distant corner of the room, desperate and dangerous, like a hunted animal at bay. Roaring and screaming harshly, 'Bah ! out of my sight ! fiends, can I have no peace, no relief from this hell ? Leave me, I say ;' the sufferer seized a chair and hurled it at the intruder's head. The attack, however, was less long than sharp. Volunteering to make an attempt to pacify the furious dyspeptic, Hamilton Browne, armed with two pills (one of powerful cathartic, the other of anodyne medicine), went to him, and more fortu-

nate than Bruno and Trelawny, induced him to take the medicines. Soon Byron was sleeping tranquilly. The next day, appearing with a countenance expressive of sadness and concern, and with his pleasantest manner, he conciliated his companions by a gentle and winning demeanour, that seemed to offer them unspoken apologies for having caused them so much trouble on the previous night. Something more than twenty-four hours later, when the poet had returned to Argostoli and had passed another night on board the 'Hercules,' Trelawny on entering his friend's cabin, to speak with him on urgent business, was witness of another scene, miserably eloquent of the nervous derangement and exhaustion of the adventurer who had brought only the wreck of an irretrievably shattered constitution to Greece, for the accomplishment of an undertaking that would have tried severely the energies and endurance of a robust soldier in the plenitude of his physical powers. Though it was near noon, Byron was sound asleep, with his pistols and Bible in their usual place on a chair, near the head of his bed. To arouse the sleeper it was necessary for Trelawny to call him by name repeatedly in a loud voice. Starting with a show of lively terror when he had been brought back to consciousness, and staring wildly at his visitor. Byron ejaculated, after a convulsive sigh, 'I have had such a dream! I am trembling with fear! I am not fit to go to Greece. If you had come to strangle me I could have done nothing.' 'Who could,' was Trelawny's cheery answer, 'against a nightmare? The hag don't mind your pistols and Bible!'

Chafing at what he thought Byron's irresoluteness,

which was in truth a policy of inaction for a definite purpose, Trelawny determined to start at once for the Morea and cross the country to Tripolitza, for the purpose of obtaining information and acting as a channel of communication between Byron and the Greek Government. Partly from courtesy but chiefly from natural reluctance to lose so congenial a companion, Byron for a short time resisted this resolve with entreaties for his friend to stay by his side, till the fit moment should arrive for them to go together to the scene of action ; but finding Trelawny bent on going his way, with Hamilton Browne for his companion, he gave them letters of introduction to the Government, and on bidding them farewell was doubtless well pleased to feel that he had two emissaries working for him, whose intelligence he could receive with confidence alike in its discrimination and honesty. Soon after their departure Byron landed his stores, dismissed the ‘Hercules,’ and planting himself at Metaxata remained there for more than a quarter of a year.

It is not quite clear what Byron did with his time during this considerable period. Leaving readers to infer that his patron found abundant occupation in the affairs of his enterprise, Pietro Gamba remarks that ‘it is easier to conceive than relate the various means employed to engage him in one faction or another ;’ and then, after alluding generally to the letters and messengers with which each of the rival factions assailed the English peer, Teresa Guiccioli’s brother records that Byron ‘occupied himself in discovering the truth, hidden as it was under these intrigues, and amused himself in confronting the



agents of the different factions.' It is to be regretted that the Italian Count, almost the only man capable of informing the world fully about Byron's daily life at Metaxata, has left so much to the imagination. Larger communicativeness on the part of so capable a witness would at least have rendered it easier to conceive the matters to which he refers so vaguely. Though Byron was usefully employed at the Cephalonian village and did well to defer his voyage to the mainland till he saw whither to go and what to do,—and though in respect to any private ambitions he may have cherished, he was unquestionably prudent in making the Greeks see he was capable of remaining a year where he was, or even of returning to England without doing anything in their behalf,—it is difficult to believe that he was fully and laboriously occupied in the matters indicated by Count Gamba. On the contrary, it is pretty obvious that without surrendering himself altogether to what Trelawny termed disdainfully 'his old routine of dawdling habits, plotting—planning—shilly-shallying—and doing nothing.' Byron led an indolent life at Cephalonia; albeit, Moore avers that whilst 'pursuing his usual simple and uniform course of life' on the island, the poet 'rose for the despatch of business at an early hour, which showed how capable he was of conquering even long habit when necessary.' Had business pressed so heavily upon him as Moore represents, he would scarcely have been (as the same biographer represents) accessible at all hours to such visitors as commonplace officers from the Argostoli garrison and other idlers from the town. His readiness to enter into the society of the little capital indicates

that, whilst pleased by the courtesy of the military and civil circles, he had abundant leisure to enjoy and repay it. If he had not sometimes wanted pastime, he would scarcely have engaged in those rather trivial controversies with Dr. Kennedy, the pietistic regimental doctor, on the evidences and doctrines of Christianity,—disputations interesting only for their testimony that the poet was to the last a sceptic, whose wavering and superstitious mind never escaped altogether from the influence of the theology (in the Reverend William Harness's opinion, the hurtful theology), imposed upon it in his childhood. Under the circumstances it is not strange that Teresa Guiccioli (remembering his marvellous power of withdrawing his mind from matters of the strongest interest and turning it to literary labour) imagined in her later time that the poet spent his leisure at Cephalonia in writing more cantos of 'Don Juan' and keeping a careful diary. That he wrote no such additional cantos is known from his last and petulant letter to Tom Moore (dated from Missolonghi, March 4, 1824), 'I have not been quiet in an Ionian island, but much engaged in business, as the Greek deputies (if arrived) can tell you. Neither have I continued "Don Juan," nor any other poem.'

To those who concur with Karl Elze in thinking that, instead of lingering in Cephalonia whilst he insisted that the Greeks should dismiss their dissensions, and made their union and establishment of order the conditions of his assistance, Byron 'ought to have regarded it as an essential part of the work he had undertaken actively to co-operate in bringing about this union and order,'

it may be fairly contended that, for several weeks after his arrival at Argostoli, he could not have taken a better course for drawing the rival chiefs and parties into the harmony requisite for effective action, than by remaining a vigilant observer of events without either committing or appearing to commit himself to the policy of any one of the several factions. Between the entreaties of Metaxa that he would hasten to the relief of Missolonghi, the entreaties of Colocotronis that he would appear at the congress of Salamis, and the entreaties of Mavrocordatos that he would come to him at Hydra, he did well to consider his position, and whilst weighing the arguments and sifting the representations of the contending claimants for his support, to reply to all of them, ‘Make up your differences and act for the whole country instead of a fraction of it : I have come to help no one of you as a partisan, but all of you as a common friend ; on touching your soil I must be welcomed as the Liberator of a United People.’ But though he did well to avoid precipitate interference, it cannot be denied that he persisted too long in his policy of inaction, that he tarried at Metaxata when he should have been at Missolonghi, and that he insisted too severely on the immediate and total abatement of the internal dissensions, which Mavrocordatos declared, as early as the 21st October, would disappear as soon as means could be found to pay the fleets and armies. In truth, the time came when (to use the words of the judicious writer of the ‘Westminster’ article) he ‘was too sensitive on this point and attached too great importance to these dissensions.’ It is little to urge in Byron’s behalf that the length of his stay in Cephalonia did Greece no

harm, for it must be admitted that under the urgent circumstances his persistence in inactivity might have proved greatly injurious to the country. On the other hand, it is something to the disadvantage of his reputation that the inactivity, which might have been and only just missed being very prejudicial to Greece, was distinctly favourable to any personal ambition, of which he may be suspected, by enhancing his influence with the Greeks, whose desire for his aid and estimate of its value naturally rose with the difficulty of getting it. If Byron saw this consequence of his inaction, and speculated upon it craftily, he doubtless persuaded himself that the gain to his influence would in the long run be a gain to the country, to which he was unquestionably desirous of rendering substantial service. Moreover, to account for the length of time that elapsed between his determination to go to Missolonghi and his departure from Metaxata, some allowance must be made for the habitual dilatoriness of the poet, who used to say with more of self-complacence than shame that, if he stayed six days in a place, he required six months to get out of it.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## MISSOLOGHI.

The Mistico and the Bombard at Sea—Their Adventures on the Passage—Byron's enthusiastic Reception at Missolonghi—Marco Botzaris's Suliotes—The Birthday Ode—The Poet's Behaviour at Missolonghi—His Differences with Colonel Stanhope—The Failure of his Health—His successive Epileptic Seizures—Lady Byron's Letter—The Poet's Unfinished Letter to Augusta—Exasperating Incidents and Gloomy Circumstances—The Rivalry of Odysseus and Mayrocordatos—Negotiations for the Congress of Salona—The Poet's Fatal Illness—His Last Moments and Last Words—The Funeral at Hucknall-Torkard.

HAVING hired two Ionian vessels—the slight and fast-sailing mistico, in which the poet made the voyage with sixteen thousand dollars on board; and the heavy bombard, in which Pietro Gamba had charge of the horses, the London Committee's stores, the larger part of the poet's munitions, and eight thousand dollars—Byron sailed from Cephalonia on the 28th of December, 1823. Touching at Zante, where the poet transacted pecuniary business with Mr. Barff, the two vessels proceeded on their voyage on the evening of the 29th, hoping to reach Missolonghi within four-and-twenty hours, the wind being favourable, the sky clear, and the air fresh without being sharp. With the exception of Byron, who was suffering from dejection, the two parties were in excellent spirits, cheering one another with patriotic songs as long as such interchange of feeling was possible, and then parting company with signals, made by firing pistols and carabines,—To-morrow

we meet at Missolonghi—to-morrow.' The hope, however, was not fulfilled. There was danger on the deep for both ships. Passing within pistol-shot of a Turkish frigate, who mistaking her for a Greek *brûlot*, feared to fire upon her, the *mistico*, escaping capture to fall in with foul weather and imminent peril of being wrecked on the Scrofes, came safe to the waters of Missolonghi on the evening of January 4, 1824, whither the *slow bombard* had arrived a few hours earlier, after having been captured by the Turks (of the same Turkish frigate, that might so easily have captured the *mistico*), taken as a prize into Patras, and released under rather droll circumstances by His Highness Yussuff Pacha.

On the following morning (January 5, 1824), Byron, wearing a scarlet coat—made probably on the pattern of the general's uniform that has imparted brilliance to earlier pages of this narrative—landed at Missolonghi to the tempestuous delight of the western chiefs, who saw in his arrival a great advantage for their province and party as well as for their country; of the mob of ill-clothed, ill-fed, and long-unpaid soldiers who looked to the 'Lordo Inglese' for a better time in respect to rations and money; and of the populace of the dirty and unwholesome little town, relieved by the Lordo's advent from the fear of despoliation and massacre,—from the dread of seeing their houses sacked by mutinous Greeks or seized by victorious Turks. Greeted with wild music, vehement acclamations, and salvos of artillery, Byron passed from the waterside through an enthusiastic multitude to the house prepared for his reception, in front of which Mavrocordatos surrounded by a brilliant body of

officers welcomed him with all the marks of respect that would have been rendered to him had he been a prince. The demonstration of universal gladness and homage,—a demonstration alike effective by picturesqueness and enthusiasm,—could not fail to gratify the vanity and pride of the poet who, if he had lost the freshness and hopeful fervour, retained the nervous sensibility and emotional temperament of his earlier time. If he had sailed from Genoa without enthusiasm, he entered Missolonghi radiant with delight and glowing with triumph. On the morrow his ceremonious levee was thronged by the chiefs of Western Greece who rendered their homage to the Liberator of their country in a manner, that may well have seemed prophetic to the poet of the coming time, when they would no less cordially render homage to him as their King.

If Byron played for a crown, it must be admitted that for some weeks he played it worthily,—with spirit and discretion, energy and tact. Catching the fire of the prevalent enthusiasm, he went (to use the expression of a sympathetic and admiring witness of his behaviour) *soldier-mad*. Surrounding himself with a body-guard of five hundred of Marco Botzaris's Suliotes, all of whom had fought in some whilst several of them had fought in all the famous chieftain's thirty victories, he busied himself in reducing them to discipline, and found his daily exercise in training them for bolder and more hazardous exploits. It was his hope that these savage warriors would march with him against stone walls as fearlessly and triumphantly as they had followed Botzaris in the open field. To win their confidence he astonished them with exhibi-

tions of his dexterity with the pistol. Accepting the office of Commander-in-Chief (the *grandiose* title of 'Archistrategos' causing him no little amusement together with some pride) of the three thousand men appointed for the expedition against Lepanto, he spoke to his friends of the military enterprise, that chiefly held his attention from his first arrival in Greece till the middle of February, with equal enthusiasm and coolness,—insisting on the good results to be anticipated from a display of martial daring on the semi-barbaric soldiers under his command ; and impressing his hearers not more by his words than his manner, that, whilst bent on figuring conspicuously in the assault of the stronghold, whose capture would go far to give the Greeks perfect possession of the Morea and to place them in a position to enter on offensive operations in the field, he was scarcely more desirous of victory than of death. 'Lord Byron,' Colonel Stanhope wrote of the 14th of January, 1824, 'burns with military ardour and chivalry, and will accompany the expedition to Lepanto.'

Whilst he still tasted the first delights of military excitement, and had scarcely entered on the series of vexatious and disheartening occurrences, which soon made him realize his constitutional unfitness and physical incompetence for the arduous undertaking to which he had committed himself under the whole world's observation, Byron wrote the familiar verses on the thirty-sixth anniversary of his birthday,—verses which, though closely subsequent events gave them a peculiarly pathetic significance, are so unworthy of his genius and so redundant of his pettiest infirmities, that they would not be brought to especial notice on



the present occasion, were it not for the biographic value of the stagey and curiously egotistical performance :—

‘ ’Tis time this heart should be unmoved,  
Since others it hath ceased to move ;  
Yet though I cannot be beloved,  
Still let me love !

‘ My days are in the yellow leaf ;  
The flowers and fruits of love are gone ;  
The worm, the canker, and the grief  
Are mine alone !

‘ The fire that in my bosom preys  
Is lone as some volcanic isle ;  
No torch is kindled at the blaze—  
A funeral pile !

‘ The hope, the fear, the jealous care,  
The exalted portion of the pain  
And power of love, I cannot share,  
But wear the chain !

‘ But ’tis not *thus*—and ’tis not *here*—  
Such thoughts should shake my soul, nor *now*,  
Where glory decks the hero’s bier,  
Or binds his brow.

‘ The sword, the banner, and the field,  
Glory and Greece, around me see !  
The Spartan, borne upon his shield,  
Was not more free.

‘ Awake ! (not Greece—she *is* awake !)  
Awake, my spirit ! Think through *whom*  
Thy life-blood tracks its parent lake,  
And then strike home !

‘ Tread those reviving passions down,  
Unworthy manhood !—unto thee  
Indifferent should the smile or frown  
Of beauty be.

‘If thou regret’st thy youth, *why live?*  
 The land of honourable death  
 Is here :—up to the field, and give  
 Away thy breath !

‘Seek out—less often sought than found—  
 A soldier’s grave, for thee the best ;  
 Then look around, and choose thy ground,  
 And take thy rest.’

Offered to the world at a moment when every home in England had a mourner in it weeping for the dead poet, when men were framing generous apologies for his shortcomings, when the women of his nation (even Ada’s mother, and Allegra’s mother) were recalling his feverish and unhappy career with tenderness, when journalists who for years had magnified his failings could remember nothing of him but his virtues and misfortunes, when death had given the verses a quality of sacredness,—it is not surprising that the best critics and connoisseurs applauded the lines for their sincerity, pathos, dignity and music. But now that Byron is far enough away from the present to be judged dispassionately, another view is taken of the poem that, with the exception of the single line—

‘If thou regret’st thy youth, *why live?*’

contains nothing to moderate the general distaste for its foppish egotism and melodramatic falseness. Greece and her cause are nothing more than a stage provided with a couch on which the actor proposes to make a pretty ending, to the admiration of a crowded house who are reminded how he killed the girls and thrilled the boys when his looks were at their best. Some fourteen years earlier, the poet, on his return to

Athens, looking more than usually delicate from the fever that had prostrated him at Patras, remarked to the young Marquis of Sligo, after regarding himself in a mirror, ‘How pale I look! I should like, I think, to die of a consumption; because then the women would all say, “See that poor Byron,—how interesting he looks in dying!”’ Moore was right in attaching importance to the anecdote, as an illustration of ‘the poet’s consciousness of his own beauty,’ and of ‘the habitual reference of his imagination to that sex, which, however he affected to despise it, influenced more or less the colour of all his thoughts.’ The Byron who wrote his dying song, thinking of the smile and frown of beauty, was the same Byron who, as he gazed on the looking-glass, wished the women to say of him, ‘How interesting he looks in dying!’

Had he steadily played the sublime coxcomb to Mavrocordatos and the Greek chiefs, as he played the part in his dying poem to the British public, Byron’s chance of the crown would have been a poor one, even though he had kept his health and gone to the Congress of Salona. But no two characters could be more unlike than the sentimental dandy of the Birth-day Ode and the sober, discreet, and studiously courteous man of affairs who, whether he was required to mediate between angry chieftains or advise the government on nice matters of policy, spoke with the good sense, persuasive firmness, and conciliatory tact of a practised statesman. Excellent in everything, his conduct during this final act of life’s drama was especially commendable for the care he took to control his impetuous temper,—the efforts

which he made to be his own master in this important particular being probably a chief cause of the sudden derangement of his nervous system, that preceded the fatal attack of fever. In his frequent conflicts with Colonel Stanhope—especially in those of them that had reference to the establishment of the printing-press and a political paper, a question on which both disputants felt warmly—Byron's command of his baneful irritability was surprising. The good sense and good argument of the frequent discussions on the Colonel's pet project were altogether on the side of the whilom professional author, who when the talk grew dangerously emphatic more than once retired adroitly from the wordy battle under the cover of a piquant pleasantry. 'It is strange,' he remarked on one of these occasions, 'that whilst Stanhope, the soldier, is all for writing the Turks down, I, the writer, am all for fighting them down.' At the very moment of his first epileptic seizure, he was playfully declaring his belief that 'after all, the author's brigade would be ready before the soldier's printing-press.' In the end Byron yielded for the sake of peace, and after subsidising one of the Colonel's organs (the Greek paper), is said to have promised contributions to another of them (the polyglot journal), which attacked the project for electing a king in a manner that must have nettled Byron greatly, if he was in his heart aspiring to the kingship. In his desire to keep on the friendliest footing with the military advocate of the press, whom he opposed so firmly, Byron concluded one of their conferences by saying with affectionate impulsiveness, 'Give me that honest right hand;' and another of

them by exclaiming earnestly, 'Judge me by my actions, not my words.' In other ways he showed similar care for the feelings of persons of inferior importance. Indeed, the only person who seems to have had reason to complain of his irritability in Greece was the Count Pietro Gamba, whom he assailed on a comparatively trivial matter—the expenditure of a few hundred dollars on red cloth and oilskin—with a frequency and bitterness that almost seemed to indicate a desire to discover ground for serious quarrel with Teresa Guiccioli's brother. 'He was constantly attacking Count Gamba,' says Colonel Stanhope, 'sometimes, indeed, playfully, but more often with the bitterest satire, for having purchased for the use of his family, while in Greece, 500 dollars' worth of cloth. This he used to mention as an instance of the Count's imprudence and extravagance. Lord Byron told me one day, with a tone of great gravity, that this 500 dollars would have been most serviceable in promoting the siege of Lepanto; and that he never would, to the last moment of his existence, forgive Gamba for having squandered away his money in the purchase of cloth.'

The agreeable excitements of Byron's first fortnight at Missolonghi were followed by vexations that sorely tried his temper, and mortifications that caused him to anticipate more serious misfortune. Five weeks of these irritating and melancholy experiences were enough to affect the poet's health to a degree, which made it manifest to all observers that he had not the physical stamina for the task on which he had entered. Indeed, before the end of the first fortnight the man of failing energy was profoundly

troubled by an incident that shook his confidence in the soldiers nearest his person ;—a riot, attended with the loss of several lives, that originated in a dispute between a party of Suliotes, who wanted quarters, and a burgher of the town, who refused them admittance to his house. Ere long Byron discovered worse qualities than turbulence in the soldiers,—his ‘lads,’ as he began by calling them,—whom he had taken into peculiar favour and personal patronage. Soon after Parry’s long-awaited arrival on February 5, 1824, with the two mountain howitzers, the sixty-one 100lb. casks of gunpowder, and the other munitions needful for the capture of Lepanto—when the brigade of artillery was almost ready for service, and Byron hoped in another week to be master of the stronghold, or the tenant of a soldier’s grave—the Suliotes, who had been tampered with by the agents of Colocotronis, made a demand for better terms,—one of their requirements being for a month’s payment in advance. Their demands being answered by concessions, which only stimulated their insolence and greed, the treacherous rascals, discovering fresh grievances, insisted that two of their number should be made generals, two should be made colonels, two should be made captains, and that there should be a further creation of inferior officers, that would have raised one hundred and fifty of the much less than five hundred men above the rank of common soldiers. To so impudent a demand there was only one answer. Telling them he would still continue the allowances for the support of their families, so that women and children should not be punished for the fault of their husbands and fathers,

Byron told the Suliotes (through Pietro Gamba) that he had ceased to be their chief, and they had ceased to be his soldiers. This rupture was the affair of the 14th of February. Byron's firmness had the results to be anticipated in the savage and servile Greeks,—immediate submission and simulated penitence. But though he took them back into his pay and nominal service on the following morning (the 15th), it was not in his power to take them again into his favour and confidence. It was obvious that Marco Botzaris's Suliotes were not the men their foreign chief had imagined them. Some days later these fellows, brave as lions in the open field, but unmanageable as wolves in the town, 'declined marching against Lepanto, saying that "they would not fight against stone walls!"'

The conduct of the Suliotes troubled Byron profoundly. But he made a strong effort to conceal his mortification at an affair that was the first of the series of blows which laid him on the bed of death. The Suliotes had barely made their submission, and received his pardon, when on the evening of February 15, 1824, whilst he was sitting in Colonel Stanhope's room, and declaring that '*after all*, the author's brigade would be ready before the soldier's printing-press,' he had his first epileptic seizure, in the presence of the several witnesses to the efforts he made to regain his self-command, on the subsidence of the convulsions. On recovering his power of speech, he said, 'Let me know, do not think I am afraid to die. I am not.' The attack was sharp, but short;—though brief it was ominous in a man of his age who had never before suffered from epilepsy. Losing his

consciousness for only a few minutes, he seems to have come fairly out of the fit in twenty minutes. Indeed, Fletcher in one of his letters speaks of the fit as having run its course 'in a quarter of an hour.' Anyhow, he had quite recovered his senses in time to receive the first rumour of the false report, that the Suliotes were in arms, and about to attack the seraglio, for the purpose of seizing the magazines ;—a report that probably steadied and strengthened the invalid's nerve, whilst it caused his friends to hasten to the arsenal to get the artillerymen under arms. On the following day, when he was lying on his bed, after being freely leeches to lessen the feeling of dull heaviness about the temples, his nerves received another alarm from the Suliotes, who covered with dirt and picturesque clothing burst into his presence, brandishing their costly arms, and demanding justice and right. Byron's behaviour at this moment of trial had the admiration of Colonel Stanhope, who witnessed the scene and knew as well as any officer, trained in Indian service, how a superior soldier should bear himself to an armed mob. 'Lord Byron,' the Colonel wrote, 'electrified by this unexpected act, seemed to recover from his sickness ; and the more the Suliotes raged, the more his calm courage triumphed. The scene was truly sublime.' Every reader of the Byronic biographies has heard of this epileptic attack. A fact less generally known is that this seizure (of the fifteenth of February) was the first of a series of attacks. In one of his letters Fletcher speaks of a second and slighter paroxysm. The valet does not speak of other subsequent attacks. Possibly he was not aware of their occurrence. It is, however,



certain that there was a third, a fourth, and yet another seizure before the end of February. After describing the first seizure, the well-informed writer of the 'Westminster' (1824) article on 'Lord Byron in Greece,' says, 'In the course of the month the attack was repeated four times.' In fact, the poet had five epileptic fits within thirteen days.

Byron was in the midst of these ominous and quickly successive seizures, when he wrote the unfinished letter to his sister, which Trelawny found at Missolonghi, together with a copy (?) of a letter from Lady Byron to her sister-in-law. Trelawny, who did well to take copies of the two documents, was strangely forgetful when he styled the unfinished letter (dated February 23, 1824) 'the last of Byron's writings.' The poet busied himself with his pen during the next six or seven weeks; several of the epistles, written by his hand in March and April, being given in Moore's 'Life.' The author of the 'Records' would have been nearer the truth had he styled it the last of the poet's deeply interesting writings.

Towards the close of his sojourn at Metaxata, Byron had been troubled by intelligence that Ada was suffering from illness occasioned by determination of blood to the head; and Lady Byron's letter was written in answer to questions, which he seems to have put to her *through* Augusta, respecting the child's health and character. Lady Byron's letter ran thus:—

*'Hastings, December 1823.*

'MY DEAREST AUGUSTA,—I will now answer

those passages from Lord Byron's letter of December 8th, which required information from me.

‘Ada’s prevailing characteristic is cheerfulness, a disposition to enjoyment; this happy disposition was only partially interrupted when at the most oppressive period of her illness, under which she was patient and tractable. The impression she generally makes upon strangers is that of a lively child. Of her intellectual powers observation is the most developed. The pertinency of her remarks and the accuracy of her descriptions are sometimes beyond her years; she is by no means devoid of imagination, but it is at present chiefly exercised in connection with her mechanical ingenuity, her self-invented occupation being the manufacture of ships and boats, or whatever else may attract her attention. Hitherto she has preferred prose to verse because she is puzzled by the poetical diction; she is particularly fond of reading since she has resumed those pursuits which depend upon sight. Previous to the suspension of them she had made some proficiency in music and began to like it. She had also opportunities of learning a little French; these with writing and reading suited to her age formed her acquirements. She is not very persevering, and with the tendency which her constitution has manifested it is not advisable to stimulate her exertion (all excitement being injurious), though it is desirable to regulate their objects. She is at present very desirous to draw, and shows a singular aptitude for that art, as far as she is permitted to use her pencil. With respect to her temper, it is open and ingenuous—at an earlier age it threatened to be impetuous, but is now sufficiently under control. She

is very fond of society and talking, yet not dull when alone. Her person is tall and robust, her features not regular, but countenance animated. The miniature is still life; she would be known by the enclosed profile. She is now in really good health under the present system laid down by Warren and Mayo. It consists of mild medicine and sparing regimen. There is great justice in Lord Byron's *medical* conjecture, but I am informed that the tendency to local congestion is not always relieved at that period, as the depletion may not be more than adequate to the increased supply of blood, and for some other reasons. I hope I have not omitted to mention any point expressed by Lord Byron.

‘I am yours affectionately,

‘A. N. B.’

As Trelawny calls the document a transcript, it has been so styled in this chapter: though it seems more probable that Mrs. Leigh forwarded her sister-in-law's actual letter, instead of a copy of it, to her brother. Another reason for thinking the document may have been the original letter is that at this period there was quite enough of general resemblance in the handwritings of the two sisters-in-law for a document penned by the one to be mistaken for a transcript made by the other. Having no familiarity with the penmanship of the two ladies, and probably being no nice connoisseur and expert in caligraphy, Trelawny was likely enough to make this mistake. He may, of course, have had positive evidence that the document was a transcript; but on the bare statement of an often careless narrator readers are not required to

believe that Augusta troubled herself to copy out the long epistle and send the transcript when (there is reason to believe) she was aware of her brother's wish to have an agreeable example of his wife's handwriting and literary style. Anyhow here is a case of noteworthy and civil (if neither affectionate nor quite friendly) correspondence between the separated husband and wife. The one seeks information from the other respecting their child; the information thus sought is given in a way sufficiently indicative of a desire that the information should be full and effectual. Another thing to be observed is that the profile of Ada, referred to in the letter, and found by Trelawny, 'with other tokens, that the Pilgrim had most cherished, scattered on the floor,' came to the poet *from* Lady Byron's hand. She sent him at Pisa a lock of their child's hair; she sent him at Missolonghi a letter (original or transcript) which, albeit addressed to Augusta, was in fact a letter of information for and *to* him, and together with this letter she sent him their child's profile. This gift may perhaps be regarded as Lady Byron's answer to his overture through Lady Blessington's friend; and it is conceivable that had Lepanto fallen into his hands, she would have sent him a congratulatory letter, together with the portrait, for which he had sued so delicately.

The unfinished letter to Augusta ran in these words:—

*'Missolonghi, February 23, 1824.*

'MY DEAREST AUGUSTA,—I received a few days ago your and Lady B.'s report of Ada's health, with other letters from England; for which I ought to be, and am (I hope) sufficiently thankful, as they are of

great comfort, and I wanted some, having been recently unwell—but am now much better, so that you must not be alarmed. You will have heard of our journeys and escapes, and so forth, perhaps with some exaggeration ; but it is all very well now, and I have been some time in Greece, which is in as good a state as could be expected, considering circumstances. But I will not plague you with politics, wars, or earthquakes, though we have had a rather smart one three nights ago, which produced a scene ridiculous enough, as no damage was done except to those who stuck fast in the scuffle to get first out of the doors or windows ; amongst whom some recent importations from England, who had been used to quieter elements, were rather squeezed in the press for precedence.—I have been obtaining the release of about nine-and-twenty Turkish prisoners—men, women, and children, and have sent them, at my own expense, home to their friends ; but one pretty little girl of nine years of age, named Hato or Hatagée, has expressed a strong wish to remain with me or under my care ; and I have nearly determined to adopt her, if I thought Lady B. would let her come to England as a companion to Ada (they are about the same age), and we could easily provide for her,—if not, I can send her to Italy for education. She is very lively and quick, and with great black Oriental eyes and Asiatic features. All her brothers were killed in the revolution. Her mother wishes to return to her husband, who is at Previsa ; but says that she would rather entrust the child to me in the present state of the country. Her extreme youth and sex have hitherto saved her life, but there is no

saying what might happen in the course of the war (and of such a war). I shall probably commit her to the care of some English lady in the Islands for the present. The child herself has the same wish, and seems to have a decided character for her age. You can mention this matter, if you think it worth while. I merely wish her to be respectably educated and treated; and if my years and all things be considered, I presume it would be difficult to conceive me to have any other views.—With regard to Ada's health, I am glad to hear that she is so much better; but I think it right that Lady B. should be informed (and guard against it accordingly) that her description of much of her disposition and tendencies very nearly resembles that of my own at a similar age.—except that I was much more impetuous. Her preference of *prose* (strange as it may now seem) *was*, and indeed *is* mine (for I hate reading verse—and always did); and I never invented anything but “boats and ships.” and generally something relative to the ocean. I showed the report to Colonel Stanhope, who was struck with the resemblance of parts of it to the paternal line, even now. . . . But it is also fit, though unpleasant, that I should mention that my recent attack, and a very severe one, had a strong appearance of epilepsy; why, I know not—for it is late in life, its first appearance at thirty-six, and, so far as I know, it is *not* hereditary; and it is that it may not *become* so, that you should tell Lady B. to take some precautions in the case of Ada. My attack has not returned, and I am fighting it off with abstinence and exercise, and thus far with success;—if merely casual it is all very well. . . .’

By those who would see Byron's disposition

towards his wife in these last weeks of his existence, and apprehend the way by which he hoped to regain her favour and confidence, this letter should be perused attentively. The letter is also noteworthy for its evidence touching the relations existing between the sisters-in-law, and the influence which Byron believed his sister to have over his wife. It is curious to observe how he hoped to manage Lady Byron through his sister, very much as Lady Byron some eight years since used to influence him through her sister-in-law. He would scarcely have thought of asking Lady Byron (through Augusta) to receive Hatagée and educate her with Ada, had he not felt himself nearing the time when he might ask a kindness and considerable service of her. The suggestion would not have been made had he mistrusted Augusta's discretion and tact, or questioned the sufficiency of her influence over Lady Byron. It speaks little for Byron's delicacy, much for the low opinion he knew his sister and wife had of his domestic morality, that he anticipated their suspicion that he regarded Hatagée as his future mistress, whilst proposing that she should be educated with his daughter. On the other hand, the hint that his age and experience should preclude the suspicion was a prudent intimation that time had tempered his passions and disposed him for orderly living, that he had sowed the last of his wild oats and meant to settle down into a sober and decorous middle-age: an intimation that was of course intended to bear fruit in his wife's regard for and action towards him. In other particulars the letter was skilfully designed to conciliate Lady Byron. The admission that if Ada resembled him in disposition, the child necessarily

had tendencies to be guarded against, coupled as it was with a hint of the writer's opinion that Lady Byron was peculiarly qualified to correct those tendencies, could not fail to reassure the jealous mother and tend to soften the injured wife. It is also worthy of observation that in this unfinished letter of the 23rd of February, the writer speaks of himself as having had only one epileptic attack. In the letter of the 20th of April, Fletcher does not give the date of the second attack, and the writer of the 'Westminster' article (who doubtless gained his knowledge from the poet's medical attendants, Bruno and Millingen) only speaks of the four subsequent attacks as having taken place in February. It may therefore be assumed that Byron had the four subsequent fits during the last six days of the troublous month.

From the middle of February to the hour of his death on the 19th of April, 1824, Byron's position in a miserable town, lying on the border of pestiferous marshes, and reeking with the ordure of its miserable streets, was in the highest degree dismal and pitiful. Disheartened by the mutinous spirit of the Suliotes, whose misconduct necessitated the postponement of the operations against Lepanto, he was afflicted by the apprehension that the convulsive seizure of the 15th of February was only the first of a series of similar attacks, that, after weakening his mind, would in the end destroy his reason. It was by playing on this fear that Bruno and Millingen eventually extorted from him a reluctant consent to be bled with the lancet. Whilst tortured with this forboding of a fate far more repugnant to his imagination than any other kind of death, he endured a succession of petty



annoyances and serious mortifications. For weeks together, every day may be said to have brought him a new trouble. A few days after the first fit a Suliote warrior, in sudden resentment at a well-deserved but imprudently delivered blow, shot the Swedish officer, Captain Sass, dead at the entrance of the seraglio, to the cordial approval of his tribal comrades, who refused to surrender the murderer to justice, on the ground that by Suliote law a blow justified any retaliation. In his reasonable alarm at so serious an affair, Colonel Stanhope urged Mavrocordatos and Byron to compel the Suliotes to leave the town; but, probably because Byron and Mavrocordatos had no power to carry out the advice, the Suliotes continued to swagger about the town and fill the surrounding country with alarming rumours. At one time it was rumoured that three hundred of these picturesque cut-throats were marching on the town; at another time some of them were said to have seized Basiladi, a fortress commanding the port of Missolonghi; a third rumour was that the Suliotes were in secret agreement with the growing party of malcontents of the Morea, who were believed to be meditating immediate insurrection and to have an increasing force of sympathisers within the town. Whilst such things were rumoured of the Suliotes, who would, of course, have been aided, if not openly joined, in any mischief by Byron's 'lads,'—even by the fifty picked lads who, occupying a barrack in the rear of the Commander-in-Chief's dwelling, were his peculiar body-guard,—a large party of Cariascachi's followers, coming in canoes from Anatolico to Missolonghi to avenge some tribal affront, threw the town into a

panic, and made prisoners of two of the Primates, who were forthwith carried off to Anatolico. Catching the spirit of the natives, the foreigners who had been imported by the Liberators became a source of embarrassment to their employers. The mechanics, brought from England by Captain Parry on the understanding that he would find them good quarters in a safe place, had barely made acquaintance with Missolonghi when they entertained reasonable mistrust of its safety, and insisted on being returned to England. Blockaded by Turkish vessels, Missolonghi was shaken by earthquake, agitated by alarms of treason, stirred to terror by anticipations of the plague. The plague stayed away; but typhus fever, typhoid fever, and malarial fever, decimated the miserable multitude of the unhappy town. Fletcher used no *bold* figure of speech when he wrote to England that the people were dying by scores in the day of fevers, referable chiefly to the marshes about and the filth within the town. Perhaps the unhealthiest point of this fever-trap was the spot covered by the Commander-in-Chief's comfortless house, that stood on the marge of the shallow creek whose surface was a chief contributor to the unwholesomeness of the town.

When Colonel Stanhope had gone off to Odysseus and the Eastern chiefs, Byron was left in this wretched station without a single Englishman who was either his friend, or in any way qualified to live on a familiar footing with him. Mavrocordatos and the Greeks of the Prince's staff were persons with whom he could act with complaisance and cordiality, but he cannot be said to have had a single friend amongst

those recent acquaintances. Though he appears to have regarded him with kindness when they were in Cephalonia, it would have been strange had the poet attached himself strongly to little Bruno, whose highest title to respect was that he was an imperfect master of his vocation. Pietro Gamba was still by the poet's side,—but in spite of all the fine things that have been written of the poet's grateful appreciation of the young Count's devotedness, and notwithstanding the attachment that existed between them at Ravenna, it is difficult to believe that Teresa Guiccioli's brother was in Greece an altogether congenial comrade to the Liberator, who rated him so roundly and 'nagged' at him so incessantly for squandering the money on scarlet cloth. There is no question that want of congenial society must be placed on the list of the depressing circumstances of Byron's life at Missolonghi. Under the circumstances it is not wonderful that he made much of William Parry—the 'fine rough subject,' as his patron styled him—who, with a natural vein of humour and a strong talent for mimicry, amused the poet with his droll stories and impudent fabrications, and was well 'worth his brandy' in so doleful a place. So many examples have been given of the way in which Byron's spirits rose under conditions the least conducive to cheerfulness, it will occasion readers no surprise to be told that even in this fever-den on the marge of a muddy creek, flanked by pestilential swamps, he bore up bravely, and for a few weeks seemed none the worse—on the contrary, almost seemed something the better for his repeated attacks of epilepsy. All through that miserable

March and later he continued to use his pen,—sometimes using it with pathetic lightness and pleasantry. Once and again he indulged his old propensity for practical joking. To scare the buffoon, Parry, who was comically timorous about earthquakes, he instructed his Suliotes (the body-guard of fifty) to roll barrels, containing loose cannon-balls, over the higher floors of his house, and by leaping at the same time on the floors to shake the whole building. Suffering much from the wetness of the season, which precluded him from taking as much horse-exercise in the open air as he desired for pastime and needed for health, he spent much of his time daily—playing with his pistols and fencing-foils in the big guard-room, in which he housed the fifty picked Suliotes, who, when the weather permitted him to mount horse, used to attend him over the neighbouring country on foot, running as fast as the horses galloped. The order maintained in these exercises deserves notice. The Captain of the Suliotes with a division of his men went first; then came the horsemen,—Byron, with Pietro Gamba on his one side, and the Greek interpreter on the other, followed by the two grooms (Tita, and the negro whom Byron begged from Trelawny) in rich liveries; the cavalcade being brought up by a rear-guard of running Suliotes.

All this while Byron persisted more rigorously than ever in the suicidal regimen,—persisting in it, however, not so much from dread of obesity, as from dread of the recurrence of epilepsy, which he imagined he would provoke by even moderate indulgence in flesh and wine. ‘I am fighting it off with abstinence and exercise,’ he wrote to his sister on the

23rd of February; and persisting in the common mistake of dyspeptic persons, who are so apt to imagine that because food burdens them they ought to eschew it, as a kind of poison, he persisted in 'fighting off' the epilepsy by abstinence, when he ought to have cosseted his stomach into better behaviour, by giving it moderate quantities of light but substantial nutriment, and at the same time have ceased to irritate it with strong cathartic medicines. Refusing to take meat in any way but that of weak broth, he also refused to eat fish,—one of the few viands to be had in excellent condition at Missolonghi. Henceforth he lived chiefly on tea, toast and vegetables; sometimes taking a little thin soup, and sometimes a little cheese. In fact, he never starved himself more rigorously than in these last weeks of his existence, when every breath of air that came into his body was loaded with marsh-poison. And there never was a time when he took more pills and Epsom salts. 'He almost every morning,' says Moore, 'measured himself round the wrist and waist, and whenever he found these parts, as he thought, enlarged, took a strong dose of medicine.' In former time, curbing his propensity to fatten, chiefly for the preservation of his personal comeliness, he now watched it with jealous anxiety as the indication, whether he was carrying out with sufficient resoluteness the rigorous regimen, by which he hoped to 'fight off' epilepsy.

Whilst things went thus ill with Byron at Missolonghi, affairs were growing brighter for the Greeks, both in their own country, where arrangements were in progress for the Congress of the Chiefs of both the

great divisions of Greece at Salona,—and also in London, where the Greek Loan was being successfully negotiated, mainly through the influence of the poet's name. At the same time, stirred by the poet's celebrity and example, friends of the Greek cause—some of them being men of affluence, with the power and disposition to contribute largely to the fund, needful for pushing the conflict to a successful termination—were hastening to Greece from England. Much good was anticipated from the Salona Congress. Much advantage could not fail to come to Greece from the streams of enthusiastic volunteers moving towards the Levant.

Something must be said of the circumstances under which, Odysseus, the most powerful and energetic of the Eastern Chiefs, determined to invite the Chiefs of the two divisions of the country, to a conference that should aim at the settlement of existing dissensions, and the unanimous arrangement of measures for the ensuing campaign. With all his anxiety and pains to avoid even the appearance of partisanship, Byron had been drawn into the position, though he was in no degree warmed by the passions, of a partisan of the Western Chiefs. At Cephalaria he foresaw that the mere accident of residence would probably expose him to a suspicion of favouring the one party more than the other ; and from the moment when he landed from the *mistico*, circumstances had tended to impose upon him the character he was most desirous of avoiding. Whilst the Western Chiefs regarded him as their peculiar patron, the Governor of Western Greece favoured the notion that, as the possessor of Lord Byron's unreserved confidence, he would be the

administrator of his influence. It was natural for Mavrocordatos to take this pleasant view of his relations with Lord Byron, who had every purpose to act cordially with him, but no disposition to be used by him as a tool. It was no less natural for Odysseus to be jealous of his rival's authority over the English peer, and to conceive that by luring Lord Byron to his side the wily Mavrocordatos, with a craft surpassing even the subtlety of Greeks, was drawing into his hands the stranger's influence—in other words, the whole English influence. Of course the Chiefs, who followed Odysseus, took the same view of the position. Byron was the bone for which the two Chiefs and their respective parties were contending. Moore represents that Byron's difficulties during March and the earlier days of April were 'not a little heightened by the part taken by Colonel Stanhope and Mr. Trelawny, who, having allied themselves with Odysseus, the most powerful of these Eastern Chieftains, were endeavouring actively to detach Lord Byron from Mavrocordatos, and enlist him in their own views.' Moore had a strong opinion that the English influence suffered severely from this action by Trelawny and Stanhope, which the biographer even ventured to stigmatize as an 'ill-timed and unfortunate schism.' In truth, however, Trelawny and Stanhope were just then far more desirous of detaching Byron from Missolonghi, lest he should die there, than of detaching him from Mavrocordatos, lest he should become a mere creature of the wily Greek's ambition. To those who can read between the lines of diplomatic correspondence and see beneath the surface of diplomatic intrigues, it is

obvious that Trelawny and Colonel Stanhope were loyally playing into Byron's hands, and that Byron had every reason for secret contentment at the doings of his two friends who, instead of wishing to thwart his designs and diminish his authority, were furthering his interest amongst the Eastern Chiefs. Wishing to keep Byron as far as possible to himself and his party, Mavrocordatos disliked the project for the Salona Congress ; and Byron was too sufficient a diplomatist to dismiss the Prince's objections with contemptuous haste. Dallying with Odysseus's envoy (Mr. Finlay), he yielded to Colonel Stanhope's agent (Captain Humphries), and made Mavrocordatos promise to accompany him to the meeting of the Chiefs. 'My dear Stanhope,' he wrote on March 19, 1824, just a month before his death, 'Prince Mavrocordato and myself will go to Salona to meet Ulysses, and you may be very sure that P. M. will accept my proposition for the advantage of Greece.' Four days later (March 23) he wrote to Mr. Barff, 'In a few days P. Mavrocordato and myself, with a considerable escort, intend to proceed to Salona at the request of Ulysses and the Chiefs of Eastern Greece, and take measures offensive and defensive for the ensuing campaign.' Three days later (March 26) he had received (from Mr. Barff) intelligence of the successful negotiation of the loan, and (from Prince Mavrocordatos) the information of his appointment to be one of the three Commissioners of the loan, which it was hoped would put an end to the dissensions that were mainly, though not altogether, due to the want of means for paying fleets and armies. Unfortunately the Congress was postponed for sufficient reasons or on fair pretexts till



the 16th of April, when Byron was dying. Had Byron left Missolonghi within 'a few days' of the 23rd of March, he might perhaps have escaped the malarial fever that gave the final blow to his failing powers. Had he appeared at Salona on the 16th of April, 1824, he would have stood there between two rival groups of Chieftains, both of them eager to conciliate the Chief Commissioner of the loan, each of them bent on surpassing the other in utterances of gratitude and devotion to their benefactor. Trelawny (as conversant as any living man in the intrigues and counsels of the two contending parties) certainly was not without grounds for his strong opinion that, 'had Byron lived to reach Salona as commissioner of the loan, the dispenser of a million crowns would have been offered a golden one.'

The sure consequence of Byron's suicidal measures for fighting off the epilepsy came no sooner than intelligent and fully informed observers of his case expected it to come. Caught in a heavy rain-shower on the 10th of April, when he was riding with Pietro Gamba, he returned to his house wet to the skin. On the morrow (April 11th) he again mounted horse and rode in the olive-woods, though he was suffering from chilly tremours and rheumatic pains. In the evening of the 11th he was in the grip of the fever that never loosed its hold of him. There is no need to tell how his youthful and incompetent doctors (Bruno and Millingen) did at the same time their best and their worst for him. In justice to these sorry physicians it must be admitted that they treated their patient no worse than he had treated himself. On the 16th, his dread of insanity was so worked upon

that he consented to be bled with the lancet. 'It is true,' these young doctors said to him, 'you care not for life; but who can assure you that, unless you change your resolution, the uncontrolled disease may not operate such disorganization in your system as utterly and for ever to deprive you of reason?' After recording that he spoke these words to his patient, Millingen adds triumphantly, 'I had hit at last the sensible chord, and partly annoyed by our importunities, partly persuaded, he cast at us both the fiercest glance of vexation, and throwing out his arm said, in the angriest tone, "There,—you are, I see, a damned set of butchers,—take away as much blood as you like, and have done with it." ' Twenty ounces of blood were taken forthwith from the man, who for the last five weeks had been living on toast and tea, and reducing himself with violent medicine. On next day (April 17th), when the bleeding had been repeated twice, blisters were put on his legs above the knees; blisters that would have been applied to the soles of his feet, had he not hinted his repugnance to exhibit his feet to the medical attendants. Of course he was weaker and in every respect worse on the 18th, but he managed to totter from his bed to the adjoining room, leaning on his servant's (Tita's) arm;—and when there he even amused himself for a few minutes with a book, before he returned to his bed. In the evening Millingen brought two other doctors (Dr. Freiber and Luca Vaya) to look at him. At first Byron refused to see the strange doctors, but afterwards out of respect for Mavrocordatos's wish permitted them to look at him. 'Very well,' he said, 'let them come; but let them look at me and say nothing.'

To one of them who, after feeling his pulse, was about to put him a question, Byron said curtly, 'Recollect your promise, and go away.' There was no woman to attend upon the dying poet. The men about him were too many and hysterical. Fletcher, Tita, Millingen, Parry and Pietro Gamba could not have wept more copiously, had there been a prize of a thousand guineas for the one who wept most. All of them seem to have regarded it as an occasion for exhibiting their sensibility at the cost of their patron's composure. The weeping of these men would alone have shown Byron his case was hopeless, and probably he learnt the fact from their misbehaviour. Anyhow he does not seem to have realized that he was dying till the strange doctors had taken their departure, when he was within two hours of breathing his last intelligible utterance. *Before* he took the first of the powerful anodyne drinks, which gave him a long slumber, there was a painful conversation (to which further reference will be made) between the sinking sufferer who could not express his desires intelligibly and the valet Fletcher, who tried in vain to apprehend his master's wishes. It was about six o'clock in the evening of the 18th of April, when he said 'Now I shall go to sleep!' the last words that ever passed his lips. After lying another four-and-twenty hours in a state of unconsciousness, he surprised his watchers at 6.15 p.m. of April 19th, 1824, by opening his eyes and then instantly shutting them. He died at that instant.

People are apt to assign excessive value to the utterances of the dying. There are, however, occasions when the speeches of the death-bed reveal

strange secrets. The occasions are more frequent when in its last efforts to exercise its failing powers the mind declares with singular and pathetic clearness its deepest and most enduring affections. When individuals are named by dying lips, it is never difficult for the listener to determine whether the persons so mentioned engage the speaker's affectionate concern or are the objects of his antipathy; for whilst it soothes a dying man or animates him with tender emotion to remember those whom he loves, it causes him visible distress to remember those whom he still abhors. Byron's last words to Fletcher are memorable for pointing to a group of persons whom he regarded affectionately in the brief interval between the moment when he knew he was sinking, and the moment when he fell under the influence of the narcotic drinks.

Disputes about Byron's last words to his servants having arisen from ignorance that the authoritative accounts of the pathetic conversation vary in several particulars, it is well to bring together the various published versions of the affair, for which Fletcher—an honest and devoted, though a dissolute and illiterate fellow—was altogether or partly accountable.

(1.) The account of the poet's last illness, drawn by Trelawny (from Fletcher's spoken words) immediately after he had made the post-mortem examination of the poet's feet, gives the talk to the valet thus:—"He was worse after this, and became delirious and violent; began to talk and give directions; took hold of one of Fletcher's and one of Tita's hands. Fletcher said, "Shall I write?" Byron muttered to him for half-an-hour, his lips moving, but indistinct. He said, "Now I have told you everything;

four thousand dollars for the——and——; but 'tis too late. I have said all; do you understand me? If you don't obey me I will haunt you if I can!" "I have not understood a word," said Fletcher. "That's a pity," Byron replied, "for 'tis now too late. You will go to Mrs. Leigh——and tell her and say——and everything, and her children," &c. "And tell Lady Byron"—heavily sighing, but only muttered—"these are dying words!" Fletcher said again he did not understand. "Good God!" he said, and tried to repeat it, but his lips only moved. He understood Fletcher, and seemed to strain hard to make himself understood, and to feel his inability.' Trelawny, be it observed, does not offer his narrative as a full and precise report either of all Fletcher *had* to tell or of all he *did* tell him; but merely as a collection of 'fresh rough notes' of the principal particulars.

(2.) In 'Mr. Fletcher's Account of Lord Byron's Last Moments,' published in the Appendix to Medwin's 'Conversations' (1824), the valet's report of the last words (a report that exhibits in every line the artifice of the commonplace *litterateur* who puts the servant's statements into shape) runs thus:—"Although his Lordship did not appear to think his dissolution was so near, I could perceive he was getting weaker every hour, and he even began to have occasional fits of delirium. He afterwards said, "I now begin to think I am seriously ill; and, in case I should be taken off suddenly, I wish to give you several directions, which I hope you will be particular in seeing executed." I answered that I would, in case such an event came to pass; but expressed a

hope that he would live many years to execute them much better himself than I could. To this my master replied, "No, it is now nearly over;" and then added, "I must tell you all without losing a moment!" I then said, "Shall I go, my Lord, and fetch pen, ink, and paper?" "Oh, my God! no, you will lose too much time, and I have it not to spare, for my time is short," said his Lordship; and immediately after, "Now, pay attention!" His Lordship commenced by saying, "You will be provided for." I begged him, however, to proceed with things of more consequence. He then continued, "Oh, my poor dear child!—my dear Ada! My God! could I but have seen her! Give her my blessing—and my dear sister Augusta and her children;—and you will go to Lady Byron, and say—— tell her everything;—you are friends with her." His Lordship appeared to be greatly affected at this moment. Here my master's voice failed him, so that I could only catch a word at intervals; but he kept muttering something very seriously for some time, and would often raise his voice and say, "Fletcher, now if you do not execute every order which I have given you, I will torment you hereafter if possible." Here I told his Lordship, in a state of the greatest perplexity, that I could not understand a word of what he said; to which he replied, "Oh, my God! then all is lost, for it is now too late! Can it be possible you have not understood me?" "No, my Lord," said I; "but I pray you to try and inform me once more." "How can I?" rejoined my master; "it is now too late, and all is over!" I said, "Not our will, but God's be done?" and he answered, "Yes, not mine be done —

but I will try——” His Lordship did indeed make several efforts to speak, but could only repeat two or three words at a time,—such as “My wife! my child! my sister!—you know all—you must say all—you know my wishes:” the rest was quite unintelligible.’

(3.) In Moore’s narrative of the death-bed scenes, the conversation between the poet and his valet assumes this shape: ‘It was now evident that he knew he was dying; and between his anxiety to make his servant understand his last wishes, and the rapid failure of his powers of utterance, a most painful scene ensued. On Fletcher asking whether he should bring pen and paper to take down his words, “Oh, no,” he replied—“there is no time—it is now nearly over. Go to my sister—tell her—go to Lady Byron—you will see her, and say——” Here his voice faltered, and became gradually indistinct; notwithstanding which he continued still to mutter to himself, for nearly twenty minutes, with much earnestness of manner, but in such a tone that only a few words could be distinguished. These, too, were only names,—“Augusta”—“Ada”—“Hobhouse”—“Kin-naird.” He then said, “Now, I have told you all.” “My Lord,” replied Fletcher. “I have not understood a word your Lordship has been saying.” “Not understand me?” exclaimed Lord Byron, with a look of the utmost distress, “what a pity!—then it is too late; all is over!” “I hope not,” answered Fletcher; “but the Lord’s will be done!” “Yes, not mine,” said Byron. He then tried to utter a few words, of which none were intelligible, except “My sister—my child.”’

Each of these versions leaves the reader in regret for its sketchiness and want of details that might have been given. All are unsatisfactory. Trelawny's memorandum consists of rough notes (hastily jotted down) of what he deemed the most important particulars of Fletcher's rambling statements. At a time so near the death, Fletcher remembered his master to have said, 'And tell Lady Byron,' and after sighing and muttering to have added, 'These are dying words!' The version of Medwin's Appendix is a vamped-up performance; but it may be deemed a trustworthy statement of Fletcher's recollections in respect to the words actually assigned to Byron. It follows that immediately after his return to England the valet was under the impression that his master thought of Lady Byron with kindness: for the servant cannot have conceived his master likely to finish an unkind message to his wife with the words, 'Tell her everything,—you are friends with her.' It may be assumed that Moore questioned Fletcher, and aided his memory with suggestions. Time and space being matters of no consideration with Moore, he should have given a record, in question and answer, of his discourse with the servant. The biographer was too much set on making this part of the story read prettily. For the sake of dramatic effect and theatrical pathos he even garnished his death-bed scenes with scraps of Pietro Gamba's romantic sentimentalities,—such as the one which makes the poet ejaculate in his last hour respecting Greece, 'I have given her my time, my means, my health—and now I give her my life! What could I do more?' It is more to the purpose that the Count, writing to the



Hon. Mrs. Leigh in 1824, assured her that in his dying moments her Byron 'named his dear daughter, his sister, his wife, Hobhouse and Kinnaird.'

The important facts of the miserably inadequate reports of the miserably insufficient words are,—(1) That Lady Byron was present in the poet's mind; (2) That he remembered her without a sign of animosity; (3) That he spoke of her in the same breath with his daughter and sister; (4) That he tried to send her a message by the servant who was 'friends with her.' He made no effort to send a message to Teresa Guiccioli. Her name did not come to his lips. The woman, whom according to Moore he loved devotedly, was forgotten. But his wife was in his thoughts.

Immediately after Byron's death it was proposed to inter his body at Athens, in the Temple of Theseus. Odysseus urged that this should be done, and Colonel Stanhope favoured the same proposal. which seems at first to have been acceptable to most of the poet's friends in Greece. On consideration, however, another course was deemed preferable, and the great mistake was made of sending the embalmed body to England.

The persons accountable for this ill-advised step were, of course, under the impression that in sending the corpse to England they were sending it to Westminster Abbey or St. Paul's Cathedral. Had they anticipated the refusal to admit the poet to the Abbey, they would, of course, have buried him in Greece, where, resting in the country he had glorified by his writing, and in which he had found an honourable death, he would in these days of quick travel have rested within a view of his native land. With the

best intentions, however, the lamentable mistake was made, and under Colonel Stanhope's charge the corpse (which had received in Greece the funeral honours accorded to princes) came in the 'Florida' to the Downs on the 29th of June, 1824. After lying in state for two days (Friday and Saturday, the 9th and 10th of July) at Sir Edward Knatchbull's house in Great George Street, Westminster, where it was viewed by a large number of mourners,\* the Pilgrim's body was taken out of town at midday of the following Monday,—the hearse being followed as far as St. Pancras Church by a long train of carriages belonging to people of noble rank or other social eminence. Passing the humble house, tenanted by Mrs. Shelley and Mrs. Williams in Kentish Town, the hearse, attended by a diminished *cortège*, made its slow way to the northern road, and then onwards by tedious stages to the county, where the landed possessions of the Byrons had dwindled from thousands of fair acres to the few square feet of earth in which the poet and a few of his ancestors sleep their last sleep. To her brother's memory, Mrs. Leigh placed in the

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\* The accounts of the poet's appearance, to those who saw him in his coffin are curiously variant. Whilst some of his old friends were of opinion that, with the exception of the look of care and distress which pervaded his features, death had wrought no great change in his countenance; others, who had known him no less intimately, were painfully struck by the alteration. Mrs. Leigh could scarcely recognise the features of her brother, so greatly had they been disfigured to her by the means used for their preservation. And Hobhouse found his old friend's face so completely altered, that he was less affected by it, than by the sight of handwriting or aught else he could recognise as having belonged to him.

chancel of Hucknall-Torkard Church, the mural tablet inscribed with these words,—

IN THE VAULT BENEATH,  
WHERE MANY OF HIS ANCESTORS AND HIS MOTHER ARE  
BURIED,  
LIE THE REMAINS OF  
GEORGE GORDON NOEL BYRON,  
LORD BYRON, OF ROCHDALE,  
IN THE COUNTY OF LANCASTER,  
THE AUTHOR OF 'CHILDE HAROLD'S PILGRIMAGE.'  
HE WAS BORN IN LONDON ON THE  
22ND OF JANUARY, 1788.  
HE DIED AT MISSOLONGHI, IN WESTERN GREECE, ON THE  
19TH OF APRIL, 1824.  
ENGAGED IN THE GLORIOUS ATTEMPT TO RESTORE THAT  
COUNTRY TO HER ANCIENT FREEDOM AND RENOWN.

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HIS SISTER, THE HONOURABLE  
AUGUSTA MARIA LEIGH,  
PLACED THIS TABLET TO HIS MEMORY.

Since Byron's interment in an insignificant church of a county where he was little known during his life and did not possess an acre of land at the time of his death, the exclusion of his body from Westminster Abbey has been the occasion for many severe reflections on the illiberality of ecclesiastical persons, and on their want of Christian charity for those from whom they differ on matters of religious opinion. But the asperity of these reflections is more manifest than their justice. The denial of a grave to the greatest poet of the nineteenth century,—in the judgment of many persons, the greatest of all our national poets after Shakespeare,—is doubtless a reason (though scarcely a strong one) for raising an edifice

for the enduring commemoration of celebrated persons, without respect to their religious views or domestic virtues. It may even be a reason (though surely a weak one) for depriving the Deans of Westminster of their power of denying sepulture within the walls of the Abbey to persons whom they deem undeserving of so great a distinction. But so long as they are required to decide, to whom the honour should be awarded or denied, it will be alike unreasonable and unjust to charge them with odious passions because their decisions are made with conscientious reference to matters which they are trained to think, and by their official obligations are bound to think, matters of paramount importance. On being moved to open the doors of the Abbey to a poet, whose literary fame was only one side of his reputation, and whose writings had not been uniformly favourable to religion and morality, it is not surprising that, taking the strictly ecclesiastical view of the question, the Dean of Westminster declined to act as though interment in the historic church were nothing more than a conventional way of recognising genius. Having for years thought the poet's life scandalous and his influence a force making for evil, it is not obvious that the Dean should have changed his opinions in deference to a change of social sentiment. Perhaps there was as much intolerance in the Byronic enthusiasts who accused the Dean of bigotry, as in the Dean who had vexed them by acting in accordance with his sense of duty.

## CHAPTER IX.

## THE DESTRUCTION OF 'THE MEMOIRS.'

Who was the Destroyer?—John Cam Hobhouse—Byron's Gift of the 'Memoirs' to Moore—The Joint Assignment by Byron and Moore to Murray—The Power of Redemption—News in London of the Poet's Death—Hobhouse's Prompt Measures—The Destruction—The Scene in Albemarle Street—The late Mr. Murray's Letter to Wilmot Horton—The present Mr. Murray's Letter to the 'Academy'—Misconceptions respecting Lady Byron—Tom Moore's Friends in the City—Spirit and Substance of the 'Memoirs.'

THE many persons who hope that a copy of Byron's autobiographic 'Memoirs' will be found amongst the Hobhouse MSS., lying under seal at the British Museum, may dismiss the hope. Lord Broughton's papers will be found to comprise letters having reference to the 'Memoirs' and their destruction. They will probably be found to contain correspondence that passed between Byron and Hobhouse respecting the 'Memoirs.' They will probably give the world a statement by Hobhouse of the reasons for destroying the 'Memoirs' and of his part in their destruction. But it is not likely that the man, who used to speak of the 'Memoirs' as foolish documents, and was of opinion that their publication would be hurtful to the poet's reputation, made a copy of the autobiography and took measures for its publication in the twentieth century to the injury of his friend's fame. Moreover, John Cam Hobhouse was more accountable

than any other person concerned in the business for the destruction of the famous papers. Had it not been for him, it is more than probable that Byron's story of his own life would still be in existence, in his own handwriting. It is not too much to say that John Cam Hobhouse was himself the destroyer of the 'Memoirs.' It is therefore in the highest degree improbable that he took care to transmit to posterity a copy of the writings which he was at so much pains to destroy.

It is, of course, in the reader's memory that Byron gave the manuscript of the greater part of the 'Memoirs' to Moore at Venice, in October 1819. Moore's account of the circumstances, under which the gift was made, runs thus :—' A short time before the dinner he left the room, and in a minute or two returned, carrying in his hand a white leather bag. "Look here," he said, holding it up—"this would be worth something to Murray, though *you*, I dare say, would not give sixpence for it." "What is it?" I asked. "My Life and Adventures," he answered. On hearing this, I raised my hands in a gesture of wonder. "It is not a thing," he continued, "that can be published during my lifetime, but you may have it—if you like—there, do whatever you please with it." In taking the bag, and thanking him most warmly, I added, "This will make a nice legacy for my little Tom, who shall astonish the latter days of the nineteenth with it." He then added, "You may show it to any of your friends you think worthy of it ;"—and this is nearly, word for word, the whole of what passed between us on the subject.' Several references to the 'Memoirs' occur in the subsequent

(published) correspondence between Moore and Byron; from some of which it appears that the autobiographer made additions to the narrative whilst he was at Ravenna. 'Have you,' he wrote to Moore on October 17, 1820, 'got my "Memoirs" copied? I have begun a continuation. Shall I send it you, so far as it is gone?'—'I told you in my last,' he wrote on November 5, 1820, 'that I have been going on with the "Memoirs," and have got as far as twelve more sheets. But I suspect they will be interrupted. In that case I will send them by post, though I feel remorse at making a friend pay so much for postage, for we can't frank here beyond the frontier.' On the 9th of December, 1820, Byron wrote to his friend, 'Besides this letter, you will receive *three* packets, containing, in all, 18 more sheets of memoranda, which, I fear, will cost you more in postage than they will ever produce by being printed in the next century. Instead of waiting so long, if you could make anything of them *now* in the way of *reversion* (that is, after *my* death) I should be very glad,—as, with all due regard to your progeny, I prefer you to your grandchildren. Would not Longman or Murray advance you a certain sum *now*, pledging themselves *not* to have them published till after *my* decease, think you?—and what say you? Over these latter sheets I should leave you a discretionary power; because they contain, perhaps, a thing or two which is too sincere for the public. If I consent to your disposing of their reversion *now*, where would be the harm? Tastes may change. I would, in your case, make my essay to dispose of them, *not* publish, now; and if you (as is most likely) survive me, add what you

please from your own knowledge ; and, *above all, contradict* anything, if I have *mis*-stated ; for my first object is the truth, even at my own expense.' In a note to the discretionary power here granted, Moore remarks in the 'Life,' 'The power here meant is that of omitting passages that might be objectionable. He afterwards gave me this, as well as every other right, over the whole of the manuscript.' In April 1821, Byron was still adding to the 'Memoirs.' On the 28th of that month he wrote from Ravenna to Moore, 'I have written a sheet or two more of the memoranda for you ; and I kept a little journal for about a month or two, till I had filled the paper-book.' On June 4, 1821, he inquired of his future biographer, 'Did you receive my letters with the two or three concluding sheets of Memoranda?' It is, therefore, obvious that the 'Memoirs' grew considerably after the gift to Moore.

As the 'Memoirs' dealt at some length with the particulars of his 'domestic troubles' (to use the phrase of Byronic biographers), Byron directed that they should be submitted to Lady Byron before publication. On the anniversary of his wedding-day, he wrote to Moore from Ravenna, 'January 2, 1820, My dear Moore,—

'To-day it is my wedding-day ;  
And all the folks would stare,  
If wife should dine at Edmonton,  
And I should dine at Ware.'

'Or thus,—

'Here's a happy new year ! but with reason,  
I beg you'll permit me to say—  
Wish me *many* returns of the *season*,  
But as *few* as you please of the *day*.'



'My this present writing is to direct you that, *if she chooses*, she may see the MS. Memoir in your possession. I wish her to have fair play, in all cases, even though it will not be published till after my decease. For this purpose, it were but just that Lady B. should know what is there said of her and hers, that she may have full power to remark on or respond to any part or parts, as may seem fitting to herself. This is fair dealing, I presume, in all events.' On the previous day (January 1, 1820), Byron had written to Lady Byron, offering her the perusal of the 'Memoir,'—an offer which she declined in the letter of March 10, 1820, printed on a previous page of this work.

The manuscript having been offered to the Longmans, who declined to purchase it, Moore carried the 'Memoirs' to Murray, who bought them in November 1821, of the song-writer for the large sum of two thousand guineas, it being stipulated in the joint-assignment, by the two poets who conveyed their property in the papers to the publisher, that Moore should at the proper time *after* Byron's death edit the documents and continue the narrative up to the date of the autobiographer's death. As Byron was not expected to die within two and a half years of the execution of the deed (though none of his familiar acquaintance could have anticipated longevity for a man of his suicidal habits), the sum paid for the MSS., not to be published during their author's life, was liberal and courageous. It was probably none the less so, because of the publisher's wish to recover his former influence over his famous poet, with whom he had recently been at discord. Byron was gratified

and surprised by the largeness of the payment to Moore. 'Your conduct to Moore,' he wrote to Murray, on August 10, 1821, from Ravenna, soon after Murray made the proposal, and some three months before the execution of the deed of assignment, 'is certainly very handsome ; and I would not say so if I could help it, for you are not at present by any means in my good graces.' It should be observed that Byron, Moore and Murray all speak of the sum as one of guineas instead of pounds,—the extra shillings being probably thrown in by the publisher, for the purpose of pleasing the poet who was apt to be quarrelsome about 'sizings.' 'I am glad,' Byron wrote to Moore, from Ravenna, August 24, 1821, 'you are satisfied with Murray, who seems to value dead lords more than live ones. I have just sent him the following answer to a proposition of his :—

“For Orford and for Waldegrave, &c.”

‘The argument of the above is, that he wants to “stint me of my sizings,” as Lear says,—that is to say, *not* to propose an extravagant price for an extravagant poem, as is becoming. Pray take his guineas, by all means—I taught him that. He made me a filthy offer of *pounds* once ; but I told him that, like physicians, poets must be dealt with in guineas, as being the only advantage poets have in association with *them*, as votaries of Apollo.”’ In his satisfaction with Murray’s treatment of Moore, and to reward the publisher for his liberality to the poet in difficulties, Byron, on September 28, 1821, wrote a letter of instructions to Murray, respecting the persons to whom he should apply for letters wherewith to make

the biography as good a book as possible. 'I also wish to give you a hint or two,' he said in the noteworthy epistle, '(as you have really behaved very handsomely to Moore in the business, and are a fine fellow in your line) for your advantage. *If* by your own management you can extract any of my epistles from Lady Caroline Lamb, they might be of use in your collection (sinking of course the *names* and *all such circumstances* as might hurt living feelings or *those of survivors*; they treat of more topics than love occasionally.'

Thus matters stood with respect to the 'Memoirs' for several months. Murray had bought them of Byron and Moore for two thousand guineas,—and had acquired his property in them by an instrument that accorded neither of the poets any power of redemption. Soon, however, Byron's heart began to fail him and his mind to waver in respect to his purpose of what Hobhouse regarded as foolish documents,—papers whose publication would certainly pain his wife, and would certainly not raise their author's character for chivalry. It has been shown to the reader how Byron softened to his wife at Pisa, and how after Lady Noel's death he entertained a hope that he and Lady Noel's daughter might come to a friendly understanding,—that would involve the exchange of civilities, and might even result eventually in the reunion, which he still declared to be impossible. Whilst relenting towards his wife and hoping that she would relent to him, it was natural for him to be doubtful whether he had done well to write the 'Memoirs,' and to be dissatisfied with and compunctious about the steps he

had taken to ensure their posthumous publication. He determined at least to recover the right to redeem the autobiography, so as to be in a position to destroy it before he went to another world. Moore was communicated with on the subject, and then Murray was requested by both the poets to give them and either of them the power of redeeming the property during the autobiographer's life ; the result being the execution of a deed on May 6, 1822, which gave the poets the wished-for power over the MSS. which they had sold irrecoverably by the agreement of the preceding November. 'Whereas,' runs the most interesting clause of this deed of May 6, 'Lord Byron and Mr. Moore *are now inclined to wish the said work not to be published*, it is agreed that, if either of them shall, during the life of the said Lord Byron, repay the two thousand guineas to Mr. Murray, the latter shall re-deliver the "Memoirs;" but that, if the sum be not repaid during the lifetime of Lord Byron, Mr. Murray shall be at full liberty to print and publish the said "Memoirs" within three months after the death of the said Lord Byron.' Thus, so early as the 6th of May, 1822—more than a year and ten months before his death—Byron was disinclined that the 'Memoirs' should be published, communicated the disinclination to his publisher, and put the disinclination on record in the legal instrument whose only object was the recovery to himself of the power to suppress the discreditable composition.

The execution of this second deed (of May 6, 1822) was followed by correspondence, touching the 'Memoirs,' between Byron and Moore, Hobhouse and Byron, Murray and Moore, before the intelligence of

Byron's death reached England. It may be taken for granted that the correspondence between Hobhouse and Byron on this interesting subject will be found in the Hobhouse papers at the Museum. One of the strange facts in the strange history of the whole business is, that Murray was kept for two years and four months out of possession of the original assignment of the autobiography, executed in November 1821 ; a deed that should, of course, have come to his hands on the payment of the two thousand guineas to Moore. On being pressed repeatedly by Murray for the deed, Moore replied that it was in the custody of Byron's banker,—Kinnaird ; and it seems that it was kept from its rightful owner by the poet's banker, friend, and agent-in-chief in England. This deed being the publisher's sole lien on the property for which he had paid so large a sum of money, he naturally wished to have it in his own hands. But the poet was within a month or six weeks of his death, before the publisher succeeded in getting the instrument into his own hands. In March 1823 he wrote urgently to Moore for the withheld deed, and in the letter begged that the second deed (according to the power of redemption) should be acted upon or cancelled without delay. Twelve months later Mr. Murray was still without his deed ; but now he demanded it so peremptorily, that he got possession of it, just in time for it to have been mislaid and, for the moment, lost by one of his own clerks, when it was needed by the destroyers of the 'Memoirs' to ascertain in whom the property of the MSS. really lay. On getting hold of the deed, so strangely withheld from him, Mr. Murray again urged Moore either to

exercise the power of redemption or cancel the second deed. After some delay Moore declared that he would redeem the MSS., with the assistance of persons in the city who would advance him the money for the purpose, on his insuring his life. On his return to town a few days hence, he would call on Murray, insure his life, borrow the two thousand guineas, and settle the affair. But on his return to town, the Irish songster didn't go into the city, didn't insure his life, forgot to call on the publisher. The fact was that Moore was shilly-shallying and procrastinating in this fashion, in order to waste time till he should get final instructions from Byron who, though he had made up his mind to redeem the manuscripts, wished to defer the repayment of the two thousand guineas, till he should be in less urgent need of all procurable money for his expenses in Greece. At first inattentive to the demands for the original deed, because he anticipated the time when Byron would wish to recover some of his power over the 'Memoirs,' and was shrewd enough to think Mr. Murray would be more manageable in respect to the concession of a power of redemption, if he had not the original deed in his hands, Kinnaird was afterwards inattentive to the demands, because he thought it useless to trouble himself to look up the deed that for his own and client's interests might as well remain where it was. It being in no way to his advantage that the 'Memoirs' should be destroyed, Moore waited for Byron to redeem them. With a settled purpose of redeeming the manuscripts and destroying them at a convenient time, Byron deferred the redemption, till the money from the Greek loan should

liberate him from the obligation to husband his resources and credit for the necessities of Greece. Kinnaird having at last surrendered the deed, Murray waited for Moore to redeem the manuscripts, Moore waited for Byron to do what he liked in his own affairs, and Byron waited for the financiers of the Greek loan to enable him to use two thousand guineas of his own money on a business—that could wait his convenience. So nothing was done for the redemption of the papers, when England was startled by the news that Byron was dead. By that event Moore lost all legal control over the 'Memoirs,' as the second deed only empowered him to redeem them during Lord Byron's life.

The news of the poet's death reached London on Friday the 14th of May, 1824. Three days later (on the afternoon of Monday the 17th of May) his MS. autobiography was given to the flames. Knowing it was Byron's intention to redeem and destroy the 'Memoirs,' and having a strong opinion that the publication of the foolish documents would injure their author's fame, Hobhouse—acting the part of a loyal friend—compassed the destruction of the writings. No concern for Lady Byron's feelings was accountable for his alacrity; for there had never been love or liking between himself and her. In stirring for the destruction of the autobiography whose publication would pain her acutely, he thought only of his friend's purpose and honour. To execute one and protect the other, Hobhouse determined to lose neither a day nor an hour. Mrs. Leigh (fortunately in town) was still in her first tears at the dismal tidings, when she received a visit from Hobhouse who, in the course of their

doleful talk spoke to her of the 'Memoirs,' told her they were Tom Moore's property, told her they were foolish documents, and assured her that at any cost they must be destroyed. On leaving Mrs. Leigh, Hobhouse went straight to Tom Moore to confer with him about the 'Autobiography.' At this time, be it observed, Hobhouse was unaware that the clause of redemption limited the right of redemption to the term of Lord Byron's life. Knowing the power had been accorded to Byron and Moore jointly and severally, he had no doubt that Moore was still competent to do what he could have done in Byron's lifetime. Moore was also under the same erroneous impression. Hence in their conference on Friday the 14th of May, both Moore and Hobhouse spoke under the same mistake. Having no doubt that on paying Murray the two thousand guineas, he would receive the MSS. as an affair of right, Moore spoke of himself as master of the position. In reply to Hobhouse's earnest request for the destruction of the writings, Moore said that he would not be their destroyer, but would give them to Mrs. Leigh to do her pleasure with them.

At this time Augusta knew little more than nothing of the contents of the 'Memoirs.' Byron had never mentioned the 'Autobiography' to her. She had never seen a slip of the manuscript; no line of the papers had been read to her or repeated to her by anyone. She knew her brother had written the narrative, and that the written matter had been the subject of some arrangement between Moore and Murray; she had also heard rumours respecting her brother's way of dealing with some of the subjects



that were said to be noticed in the memoranda; but beyond this Byron's sister knew nothing of the personal history.

On Saturday the 15th of May, Augusta received from Hobhouse a large addition to her information respecting the 'Memoirs.' Still under the misapprehension respecting the property in the documents, Hobhouse told her that Moore refused to destroy the papers, but was ready to give them to her to do her will with them. Moore would not give them to anyone else, nor would he take upon himself the responsibility of destroying them. Under these circumstances Hobhouse informed Mrs. Leigh that she must find courage to accept the writings from Mr. Moore and burn the foolish documents as soon as possible. The announcement may well have troubled the poet's sister, and made her implore that so burdensome and terrible a task might not be put upon her. To nerve her to do what he would not have hesitated to do himself, could he have gained sole and lawful possession of the foolish documents, Hobhouse assured Mrs. Leigh that her brother had repented the composition of the 'Memoirs,' had determined they should never see the light, had made up his mind to regain possession of them for the express purpose of destroying them. In burning the 'Memoirs,' she would only be doing for her brother what he had meant to do, and could no longer do for himself. This solemn assurance nerved Augusta to undertake the task assigned to her. On reflection she found courage to say she would take the manuscripts from Moore and be their destroyer. Already the question had been raised respecting the persons who ought to com-

pensate Moore for redeeming the 'Memoirs' at his own cost. Augusta was of opinion that Lady Byron ought not to be asked to contribute anything towards the 2000*l.*, or guineas; that, the destruction of the autobiography being required for her brother's honour, it would be an indelicacy and a meanness for his kindred either to ask or accept money from Lady Byron for the purpose, as though the destruction were about to be made out of regard for her feelings. On this point of honour Mrs. Leigh was emphatic. Lady Byron had, however, been already communicated with on the subject.

One of the persons to oppose Hobhouse's purpose of destroying the 'Memoirs' was Mr. Wilnot Horton, who after conferring with Moore and Murray on the subject agreed to join with them in strenuous opposition to the poet's executor. Calling on Mrs. Leigh on the 16th of May (Sunday) he informed her that Moore had lost the right of redeeming the 'Memoirs,' which on Byron's death became the absolute property of the publisher; that Murray was no less willing than Moore to resign the 'Memoirs' to her; but that like the man of letters the publisher felt strongly that the documents should not be destroyed. Mr. Wilnot Horton was urgent that instead of being put on the fire the 'Memoirs' should be sealed and sent to the bank, so that at some future time it should be possible for a discreet editor to give to the public the unobjectionable passages of the writings. For a moment, but only for a moment, Mrs. Leigh wavered in her purpose to destroy the MSS. in accordance with Hobhouse's entreaty and her promise to him. On learning that Murray was the owner of the

papers, she was for a brief while disposed to escape from the promise, which she had made on the understanding that the foolish documents belonged to Moore and would come to her hands, as a gift from him. But when Mr. Wilmot Horton told her she could not withdraw from the affair, and pressed her to join with him in insisting that the manuscripts should be preserved with a view to eventual publication, she declared stoutly that Mr. Hobhouse's opinion—the opinion of her brother's closest and staunchest friend—was conclusive with her. In vain Mr. Wilmot Horton tried to win her to another opinion. She declared that she would have nothing to do in the matter, except for the destruction of the papers in accordance with Mr. Hobhouse's desire. Finding himself unable to shake her, Mr. Wilmot Horton said he would consent, albeit most reluctantly, to the destruction of the writings.

Hence on Sunday the 16th of May, Murray was protesting against the destruction, Moore was protesting against the destruction, and Wilmot Horton (till Mrs. Leigh induced him to consent to it) was protesting against the destruction. On the other hand, Hobhouse and Mrs. Leigh were resolute for the destruction; Mrs. Leigh's attitude being, as she repeatedly averred, due to Hobhouse's influence.

On the afternoon of the ensuing day (Monday, May 17, 1824), the 'Memoirs'—consisting of several sets of writings (*i.e.*, the written matter given to Moore at Venice in 1819, and the several lots of additional matter sent to him from Italy)—and the only existing copy of the entire body of the Memoranda, made either by Moore or under his authority, were

destroyed in the drawing-room of Mr. Murray's house in Albemarle Street, in the presence of the publisher himself, the publisher's son (the present chief of the great publishing house), Moore, Hobhouse, Colonel Doyle, Mr. Wilmot Horton, and Mr. Luttrell,—in all, seven persons. It is not surprising that no report has come to the public of the proceedings at a meeting that was remarkable for disorder and excitement. Doubtless an account of the meeting will be found in the Hobhouse MSS., but it is questionable whether Hobhouse himself kept his head sufficiently cool and clear to be able on leaving the assembly to put on record all the incidents of the conference that ended with the burning of the papers. Warm words passed between Moore and Murray respecting the property in the 'Memoirs,' each of the disputants maintaining he was the owner of the writings;—Mr. Murray being altogether right and Moore altogether wrong in the controversy, which could not be settled at the moment by references to the deed of assignment, as one of Mr. Murray's staff had misplaced and for the while lost the instrument which the publisher had been at so much pains to get possession of. The conclave was curiously prolific of disputes on irrelevant questions. At times the six persons were speaking at once on the same question; at other times, whilst three of the party were in warm debate on one point, the other three (the present Mr. Murray seems to have been only a spectator of the burning) were talking loudly on another point. One of the transactions at the assembly was the repayment (by Moore to Mr. Murray) of the money which the publisher had paid for the

copyright of the documents. How Moore got the money is a mystery ; that Murray took the money is certain. Probably Mr. Murray could not have said at the moment whether he took the money as a redemption-payment for the MSS. which Moore had lost the right of redeeming, or as payment for the resale of the MSS. to the person of whom he had bought them, or as a compensation (a most inadequate one, under the circumstances) for his own sacrifice of a valuable property. One thing is certain ; the publisher behaved excellently well in the business that exposed him to no little misrepresentation and undeserved censure. Hobhouse declared afterwards that he would never be silent when Murray was run down in his hearing for the destruction of the 'Memoirs,' for he knew how honourably the publisher had borne himself in the matter.

In the first number of the 'Academy,' the present Mr. Murray published some years since, under his own signature, an interesting statement of particulars touching the history of the famous manuscripts, of whose destruction by fire he was himself an eye-witness in the drawing-room of his father's house in Albemarle Street. Throughout this letter (to be found in the Appendix to Elze's 'Life of Lord Byron') the present Mr. Murray speaks of the sum paid by his father to Moore, and repaid by Moore in 1824, as 2000*l. not* guineas. Moore certainly gave Byron to understand the payment made by Murray was 2000 guineas. Byron, as the reader knows, wrote of the publisher's guineas, and took credit to himself for teaching the man of business to pay in *guineas*. Moreover, in a letter to Mr. Wilmot Horton, May 19,

1824, written only two days after the burning of the 'Memoirs,' when all the facts were fresh in the writer's mind (a letter also to be found in Dr. Elze's 'Appendix'), the late Mr. John Murray is no less precise in speaking of 2000 guineas as the price paid and the sum repaid. 'A joint assignment of the "Memoirs,"' the late Mr. Murray says in this letter, 'was made to me . . . in consideration of the sum of 2000 guineas.' Quoting the *ipsissima verba* of the redemption clause of the second deed, the late Mr. Murray, obviously copying from the deed (*literal* accuracy being his object), wrote into this remarkable letter, 'If either of them shall, during the life of Lord Byron, repay the 2000 guineas to Mr. Murray.' Towards the close of the same letter, in a very noteworthy sentence of the epistle, the writer speaks of 'the repayment of the 2000 guineas advanced by me.' Which of the two was right on this not unimportant point,—John Murray the father or John Murray the son? As he has not seen the two deeds, the writer of this work hesitates to say positively which of the two gentlemen was in error. But it is obvious one of the two was wrong. If the present Mr. Murray did not make a slip, the late Mr. Murray made one. There are reasons which dispose the present writer to acquit the late Mr. Murray of inaccuracy in the matter.

In his letter to the Editor of 'The Academy,' the present Mr. Murray, speaking of the destruction of the MS. (there were several MSS.) says, 'The proposal to destroy it originated, I believe, with my father the late Mr. John Murray; and his reason for making it (as he has stated in a letter to Mr. R. W. Horton, printed in No. 185 of the "Quarterly Review") was

his "regard for Lord Byron's memory, and respect for his surviving family" . . . since it was surmised that the publication might be injurious to the former and painful to the latter. The friends of Lord and Lady Byron "united in wishing for its destruction." On this important point, the present Mr. Murray was careful to speak only of his *belief*, not of his *knowledge*. It is certain that the present Mr. Murray was mistaken in this belief. On Sunday the 16th of May, 1824, the late Mr. Murray was protesting against the destruction. Hobhouse had made up his mind the 'Memoirs' should be destroyed immediately, before he had spoken a word to Mr. Murray on the subject:—at least two full days before the late Mr. Murray ceased to protest against the destruction. Moreover, the very letter by the late Mr. Murray to Mr. Wilmot Horton, which was quoted from by the present Mr. Murray in justification of his belief, contains conclusive evidence against that belief. The late Mr. Murray's words to Mr. Wilmot Horton in the letter of May 19, 1824, are—*'it was enough for me that the friends of Lord and Lady Byron united in wishing for their destruction;'*—words of avowal by the late Mr. Murray himself that, instead of being the originator of the destruction, he merely consented to the desire of the friends of Lord and Lady Byron, (Hobhouse being the most urgent and influential of those friends.) To the same effect in the same letter, the late Mr. Murray called Mr. Wilmot Horton to witness, that regard for Lord Byron's honour and for the feelings of Lord Byron's family made him (the writer) *'more anxious that the "Memoirs" should be immediately destroyed*, since it was surmised that the

publication might be injurious to the former and painful to the latter;’ the force of the ‘more anxious’ being shown by the context to be that the writer only (and let it be observed, *most justly*) claimed credit for being less eager for pecuniary advantage, than anxious for the poet’s honour and the feelings of the poet’s surviving relatives. The whole letter shows that, even in the writer’s opinion, his consent to the destruction was *subsequent* to his knowledge of the wish of the poet’s friends for the destruction.

In the letter to the Editor of ‘The Academy,’ the present Mr. Murray says, ‘The following persons were previously consulted, as a matter of courtesy, and were present at the burning,—Mr. Hobhouse, as executor and friend of Lord Byron; Colonel Doyle, as a friend of Lady Byron (who actually offered 2000*l.* for the MSS., which she did not pay); Mr. Wilmot Horton, as friend of the Hon. Mrs. Leigh; my father and Mr. Moore, who alone for some time opposed the destruction.’ Had the present Mr. Murray known that Hobhouse was the first person to say the ‘Memoirs’ must be destroyed, and to tell Mr. Murray so in strenuous terms, he would scarcely have spoken of the future Lord Broughton as being consulted only from a motive of courtesy.—Though Mr. Wilmot Horton used to act for Mrs. Leigh in matters of business, and may therefore be fairly described as representing her in the Albemarle Street drawing-room, it is certain that he was present at the burning of the documents quite as much in the interest of Lady Byron as in the interest of Mrs. Leigh.—Loose things were said and written about



the destruction of the papers in 1824 and several subsequent years, and it is probable that the present Mr. Murray was placing undue reliance on written words, when he put into the letter to the editor of 'The Academy' the statement that Lady Byron 'had actually offered 2000*l.* for the MSS., which she did not pay.' Whatever her failings, Lady Byron was not the woman to forego a payment she had promised to make. It is inconceivable that she ever made the offer. If she made it, she was a far more mysterious and perplexing woman than even her bitterest enemies have thought her.

It was, of course, her wish that the 'Memoirs' should be destroyed. Wishing it for her own sake, because she knew they would exhibit her in a most unamiable light to the world, she wished it even more strongly for the sake of her daughter. She had spoken in all sincerity when she told Byron that for Ada's sake she should regret the publication of such a work. It was probably her determination to publish her case against her husband should his autobiographic statement be published after his death. But she was studiously careful, whilst the fate of the 'Memoirs' was under deliberation, to say nothing that could expose her to a charge of causing the destruction of the narrative. The position she assumed was that, as from unfortunate circumstances she was not the guardian of her husband's honour in any matter, least of all in a matter affecting her feelings in so peculiar a manner, it devolved on the members of the Byron family to decide what should be done with the 'Memoirs.' She may, indeed, have expressed a hope that she and her family should not

be under the painful necessity of proclaiming the falseness of the record and the writer. If she said anything to this effect, her words of course implied that if she were struck she would defend herself. But beyond this, she certainly never said anything to influence the decision of anyone of the persons who committed the papers to the flames ; and the writer of this page has reason to believe that she never said so much to any one of them while the fate of the MSS. was under deliberation. It is certain that Lady Byron is not fairly chargeable with either instigating or encouraging others to destroy the 'Memoirs,' whose publication would have been in the highest degree offensive to her. It was a matter of honour with the proud woman to act so as to guard herself from an imputation of compassing the destruction of the papers,—to guard herself against a suspicion of fearing the indignity with which she was menaced. Hobhouse determined to destroy the papers without consulting her on the matter ; and it would be absurd to suggest that he was moved to the determination by tenderness for the feelings of the woman, whom he cordially disliked. Is it likely that, knowing Hobhouse's resolve to destroy the papers almost as soon the resolve was communicated to Augusta, Lady Byron—the discreet, judicious, unimpulsive Lady Byron—made an offer of 2000*l.* for the MSS., which she was well aware would be destroyed by Hobhouse and Augusta?

The destruction of the papers being, however, so obviously to Lady Byron's interest, it is not wonderful that it was imagined by people of her circle, and

even by persons concerned in the act of destruction, that the 'Memoirs' were made away with, chiefly out of respect for her sensibilities. Mr. Murray probably took this view of the matter. Mr. Wilmot Horton certainly took it; and consequently he had a strong opinion, when it became a question how Moore should be repaid the 'satisfaction money' he paid Murray on the day of conflagration, that Lady Byron ought to provide the requisite 2000*l.* or guineas. All she offered to give towards the arrangement was a moiety of the sum of repurchase. Her case being that the documents having been burnt for the sake of Byron's fame, and not out of regard for her feelings, she maintained that the Byron family should find the money needful for the settlement with Moore. Augusta was of the same opinion, and insisted that her sister-in-law ought not to be asked to contribute anything to the payment. On finding, however, that no one of the Byron family, with the exception of Augusta, would give money for the purpose, Lady Byron consented to a proposal that she and Augusta should each provide a thousand pounds (or guineas) for the purpose. The papers having been burnt on Monday afternoon, Mr. Wilmot Horton sent an express over to Lady Byron to assure her of their destruction; the messenger despatched before six o'clock p.m. with the welcome tidings, also conveying an assurance to Lady Byron that the sender of the intelligence would breakfast with her on the following Wednesday. At the breakfast the chief matter of conversation between Lady Byron and her visitor was the necessity for repaying Moore. Ere long it was arranged that Lady Byron and

Mrs. Leigh should each deposit a thousand pounds (or guineas) in the hands of Dr. Lushington and Mr. Wilmot Horton for Moore's repayment. For some reason, this arrangement fell through,—possibly because Dr. Lushington saw that by acting in the matter he would reveal to Moore that the money came to him partly from Lady Byron. After a lapse of many months, it was proposed that Hobhouse and Mr. Wilmot Horton should be the trustees for settling the business. Dr. Lushington, however, thought the business could be settled more satisfactorily through Murray, to whom the advocate or Lady Byron herself may have written in guarded terms on a subject that, holding the attention of a bevy of persons, was the occasion of gossip and surmise in several coteries. Possibly a cautiously worded and undated note by the advocate or his client was the cause of the present Mr. Murray's impression that Lady Byron offered 2000*l.* for the 'Memoirs,' but the present writer has no knowledge that would justify him in assigning the misconception positively and authoritatively to any such cause. More than once the business was on the point of settlement. There were several schemes for liberating Moore from the serious responsibility he had incurred for the sake of other people. But the business hung on hand till 1828, when the poet was at length repaid in a singular manner, to be set forth on an ensuing page.

Never a rich man, Moore in the May of 1824 had for some years been in straitened circumstances. To relieve the pressure of the poverty that bore heavily on his friend, Byron authorized and

encouraged him to sell the 'Memoirs,' and concurred with him in the deed of assignment. The facility with which Moore raised the 2000*l.* (or guineas) from 'friends in the City' for Mr. Murray's repayment must have struck the readers of this chapter as curious. 'Friends in the City' are seldom so obliging to a not rich poet, as to lend him so large a sum. When they come to be unsealed, the Hobhouse (Broughton) papers will possibly explain *how* Moore was enabled to borrow the money so readily, and *why* he was so prompt in borrowing so large a sum merely to get possession of the documents, which he already knew would be destroyed the day after to-morrow. In the City the poet could of course have borrowed more than two thousand guineas to redeem the MSS., which Byron's death had made worth twice that sum, if he had been in a position to deposit the papers as security for the loan. But he was not in that position. His alacrity in borrowing the money at high interest would not have been surprising, if he had seen his way to sell the MSS. for a much larger sum to another publisher. But he knew the fate awaiting the papers when he borrowed the money; for on Friday, the 14th of May, Hobhouse went to him straight from Augusta, and told him the MSS. must be destroyed. The poet, therefore, knew well what he was doing when he went to 'his friends in the City.' And it may be taken for granted that the poet's 'friends in the City' knew what they were doing when they lent him two thousand guineas. Moore, of course, borrowed the money on an understanding of some kind that he would not suffer from his alacrity in doing the Byron family an important service.

And his 'friends in the City,' of course, lent him the money on an intimation from persons of better financial credit than the poet, that they would not suffer for their confidence in the songster. So it was, that Moore went to the conclave in Albemarle Street, with notes in his pocket-book for Mr. Murray's repayment. It is worthy of remark that, though the money was repaid to him *by* Moore, Mr. Murray did not regard himself as taking Moore's money, but the money put somehow or other into Moore's hands by 'the friends of Lord Byron.' This is obvious from a passage in the letter from Murray to Mr. Wilmot Horton, written on the 19th of May, 1824,—two days after the writer's receipt of the money. 'You will also be able to bear witness,' the publisher wrote, 'that, although I could not presume to impose *an obligation on the friends of Lord Byron* or Mr. Moore, by refusing to receive the repayment of the two thousand guineas advanced by me—yet I had determined on the destruction of the "Memoirs" without any previous agreement for such repayment:—and you know the "Memoirs" were actually destroyed without any stipulation on my part, but even with a declaration that I had destroyed my own private property,—and I therefore had no claim upon any party for remuneration.' Mr. Wilmot Horton never for an instant regarded Moore as paying away for the 'Memoirs' 2000*l.* (or guineas), without feeling confident that he would be repaid by the Byron family. Though he knew Moore was legally responsible for the money to his 'friends in the City,' Mr. Horton regarded the poet as in fact merely paying away the money of Lord Byron's friends, in accordance with their instructions. Regarding the poet as

nothing more than the channel, Mr. Wilnot Horton also regarded him as the wrongly selected channel, through which the money had passed from Lord Byron's friends to the publisher. Hobhouse certainly took the same view of the affair. Colonel Doyle (Lady Byron's friend) took the same view of the transaction. No evidence has come to the present writer respecting Mr. Luttrell's view of the business ; but if Mr. Luttrell imagined that Moore paid the money of his own mere motion, and without an assurance of protection from loss through the transaction, he was the only one of the six persons concerned in the destruction of the papers to credit Moore with such magnanimity.

As the actual borrower of the money, and the person who paid it away, Moore was, however, in a position to credit himself with this magnanimous behaviour, and he lost no time in telling his friends in London and Paris how grandly he had borne himself in the business. Writing on June 23, 1824, to the Marquise de Dolomien, Dame d'honneur of the Duchesse d'Orléans, from Sloperton Cottage, the poet said, 'Finding that his lordship's family felt such anxiety on the subject of these "Memoirs," I placed them at the disposal of the person whom I knew he loved best among them (his sister), and only suggested that the papers should not be entirely destroyed, but that such parts as upon perusal should be found unobjectionable, might be preserved and published. It was the wish of his sister, however, that they should be utterly, and without any previous perusal destroyed, which was accordingly done, and I paid back to the bookseller the two thousand guineas which he had

advanced to me on the manuscript. The family have since been very anxious to be allowed to reimburse me this money, but I have declined their offer. I ought to mention the motive which determined me to give up the "Memoirs" was the knowledge that Lord Byron himself had lately expressed some regret at having written them.' Under the circumstances there is not much to censure severely in this droll piece of figuring on paper. It certainly was not strictly veracious. Moore knew at the time of writing that he did not give up the 'Memoirs' to Augusta or anyone else; that having lost the power of redeeming them, he had lost the power of giving them away; that the MSS. were destroyed by their indisputable owner, Mr. Murray, from whose possession they went straight to the flames in his own drawing-room; and that, if he did not look for repayment of the two thousand guineas, he most certainly expected that he would be relieved by the Byron family of his obligation to repay the two thousand guineas to 'his friends in the City.' It is noteworthy that Moore still speaks of *guineas*, not pounds.

It is certain that Moore told nothing more than the truth,—indeed, he told less than the whole truth,—when he assured the Marquise de Dolomien his desire was 'that the papers should not be entirely destroyed, but that such parts as upon perusal should be found unobjectionable might be preserved and published.' On Sunday, May 16, 1824, Mr. Wilmot Horton (who wished the MSS. to be preserved under seal at the bank) impressed on Mrs. Leigh that both Moore and Murray were set against the contemplated destruction. That Moore opposed the de-



struction almost to the very moment when the MSS. were thrown into the publisher's grate we know from the statement of Mr. Murray, as well as from Moore's assertions. In the letter, written two days after the conflagration, the late Mr. Murray said to Mr. Wilnot Horton, 'Why Mr. Moore should have wished to preserve them I did not nor will not inquire.' With respect to Moore's strenuous and even stubborn resistance to the destruction, the present Mr. Murray wrote to the Editor of 'The Academy,' 'Mr. Moore, who alone for some time opposed the destruction, . . . This condition Moore did not fulfil; consequently his interest in the MS. entirely ceased on Byron's death; by which event the value of the MS. was greatly enhanced, probably doubled. This fact, no doubt, rendered Mr. Moore more than ever anxious to recover the Autobiography. . . . The MS. however, by general consent, was destroyed, Mr. Moore, though reluctantly, concurring.' The present Mr. Murray's suggestion of a motive for Moore's action in fighting so stubbornly for the preservation of the documents is unfair to Moore. There being other and obvious reasons for Moore's action, there was no need for the insinuation that he wished to preserve the documents in order to sell them again at a large profit. Hobhouse having declared to him that the MSS. must and *should* be destroyed, Moore came to the conclave, well knowing that Hobhouse would have his way in the matter. Still the poet made a stubborn fight, at least a show of fighting stubbornly, for the preservation of the papers which he knew would be put on the fire, before the meeting separated. It was needful for the honour of Byron's

selected biographer to do so, so that for the remainder of his days he might be able to say, 'I did my very best to preserve the papers.' Moreover, though he could not question the propriety of withholding from the public the MSS. which Byron had himself determined to withhold from publication, Moore (as Byron's eventual biographer) of course wished to have the documents preserved, in order that, without precisely using them, he might make use of them whilst writing his friend's history. The man, who had made himself personally responsible for the money borrowed in the City, who was the legal and actual borrower of the 2000 guineas, had another reason for wishing to preserve the MSS. Mere verbal promises, made in moments of excitement, are not always kept either to the word or to the spirit, when there has been time for the excitement to subside. Though he was sure that the persons who had engaged to see him through the business without loss meant to keep the verbal assurance, Moore knew enough of human nature to see the peril of his position, and to conceive the possibility that he would at some future day be required to repay out of his own pocket the money, obtained from 'his friends in the City.' On the occurrence of this contingency the existence of the 'Memoirs' would be of great service to the poet, who had ventured so much for the convenience and peace of Lord Byron's relatives. Should he be pressed for repayment with interest by his civic creditors, and should the Byron family, repudiating an engagement put upon them by too zealous friends, so long as the MSS. remained in existence, especially if he were one of their custodians, Moore saw he

would be in a position to protect himself. It is not wonderful, therefore, that he was reluctant to acquiesce in the destruction of his only material security from a serious loss.

At the time of the destruction, Moore expected to be relieved of his liability to 'his friends in the City' in a few days, at the most in a few weeks. But he was disappointed. Several arrangements for settling the business fell through; the chief difficulty being to devise a plan for the settlement, that should not expose Lady Byron to a suspicion of paying for the destruction of the documents, for whose destruction she was not accountable, either as instigator or approver. Moore's claim for the payment of the debt came to be associated in the minds of persons concerned in the business with Mr. Murray's quite reasonable expectations of some fair recompense for the loss he had sustained, by his spirited and most honourable acquiescence in the measures for sparing the feelings of Byron's relatives. Mr. Murray had received for his part in the destruction of the 'Memoirs' only the bare sum (without interest) which he had paid out of hand in 1821 for the MSS., that at the time of their destruction were worth twice as much. Under these circumstances it would have been strange had he not looked for some further remuneration. Notwithstanding the passages in his letter of May 19, 1824, to Mr. Wilmot Horton, which indicate a different state of feeling, it is certain that Mr. Murray did look for additional recompense, and that with proper delicacy and firmness he submitted his quite fair view of his own case to the persons best able to satisfy his reasonable expectations.

The whole business hung on hand till 1828. 'So matters,' the present Mr. Murray wrote in the letter to the Editor of 'The Academy,' 'rested till 1828, when the appearance of Leigh Hunt's "Byron and his Contemporaries" convinced my father that an authentic "Life of Byron" was demanded, for which only Moore and he were possessed of the necessary materials. He therefore arranged with Moore to prepare the "Life, Letters, and Journals of Lord Byron," published in 1830. For this Moore received the sum of 1600*l*. But (and this is the point which, in justice to my father's memory, I am anxious to state) *over and above the sum so paid*, Mr. Murray discharged Moore's bond with his creditors, upon which he had raised the 2000*l*. paid by him immediately after Byron's death; together with the interest thereon and other charges, amounting to 1020*l*. more. Thus making a total sum of 4620*l*.' It is not, of course, to be supposed that the late Mr. Murray paid Moore the preposterous sum of 770*l*. for each of the six fudging little volumes of the 'Life,'—an execrably poor book of excellently good materials. Most of the good materials—the vivid and piquant letters from the poet to his publisher, and the letters which the poet had authorised the publisher to seek and gather from his correspondents—were no part of Moore's contribution to the noble stock of materials. With the aid of a hack, paid at the rate of four guineas a-week for a couple of years, Mr. Murray could have produced a much better book without Moore's help. Murray had no strong liking for Moore, and was well aware he could have produced a good 'Life' of the poet without

Moore's assistance. The notion that so shrewd a master of his affairs paid 4620*l.* for Moore's co-operation is comical. The price the publisher really paid for that co-operation (1600*l.* for the six volumes, 266*l.* 13*s.* 4*d.* a volume) was munificent, almost to prodigality. It may be assumed that the present Mr. Murray, getting his information from insufficient records, unintentionally mixed up two separate and different pieces of business. The late Mr. Murray *did* (as his son alleges) discharge Moore's bond with his creditors, together with the interest and costs; but he should be regarded as having done so with money placed in his hands for that purpose. The publisher was chosen as the agent for satisfying Moore's claims on Byron's relatives; and a better agent for the delicate and strictly confidential business could not have been found than the publisher, a man of nice honour and so good a keeper of a secret, that he went to the next world without imparting this particular secret even to his own son. Moore certainly came well out of the business:—getting 2100*l.* for the destroyed 'Memoirs' and 1600*l.* for writing the 'Life:' in all 3700*l.*!!

From what has been said Dr. Elze may see how greatly he was mistaken when he wrote,—'In this affair the character of Lady Byron appears in the most unfavourable and unworthy light; for if she did not instigate, she certainly encouraged, the destruction of the "Memoirs," thus cutting off from her husband in the grave his chosen means of defence against the many calumnies heaped on his name on account of the separation, notwithstanding that the last word had by him been generously secured to

herself.' Every statement of this sentence should be expunged. Byron did not write the 'Memoirs' to defend himself from calumnies, so much as to entertain the world with piquant anecdotes about his doings and the doings of other people, and to give a one-sided account of his quarrel with his wife. Though he had chosen this way of telling posterity what to think of himself and others, he repented of his purpose, and two years before his death took steps to recover the power of withholding the record from publication. From May 1822, when he declared himself, in a legal deed, 'inclined to wish the said work not to be published,' the inclination grew steadily to a resolve that the narrative should not be given to the world. Partly from dilatoriness, chiefly from the influence of the circumstances which made him reluctant to part with two thousand out of the few thousand guineas in his hands, he had delayed redeeming the papers he meant to withhold. Had it not been for the emergencies of his Greek enterprise, he would probably have redeemed the papers before leaving Cephalonia. He had determined to withhold the composition from the press. Moore knew of this determination. He would, therefore, have been guilty of black treason to his friend, had he after Byron's death given the 'Memoirs' to the world. In truth, Moore is open to reproach for allowing so much of the substance and known spirit of the 'Memoirs,' which Byron had virtually suppressed as unworthy and reprehensible, to appear in those pages of the 'Life' that refer to Lady Byron and her relations. Hobhouse knew of Byron's determination; and from his know-

ledge how strongly set Byron was on the subject in the closing months of his life, he had no sooner heard of his friend's death than he decided to destroy at once the writings of which the poet had repented. How, then, can it be said that the destruction of the MSS. deprived Byron 'in the grave of his chosen means of defence?' For the destruction, determined upon by Hobhouse before she was spoken to on the subject, Lady Byron was in no sense responsible. She neither instigated nor encouraged the destroyers.

Byron had ordered the suppression in terms that became, after his death, tantamount in Hobhouse's judgment to an order for the destruction. Moore, generally held accountable and almost as generally censured for the destruction, was not the destroyer of the writings—indeed, he was the only one of 'the six' to make a hard fight for their preservation. The one of 'the six' to see the need for immediate destruction, and, overbearing the opposition of Moore, Murray, and Wilmot Horton, to insist on the destruction, was John Cam Hobhouse. He ordered the deed and did it, out of loyalty to his dead friend, who had resolved that the foolish documents should not go to press.

And what has the world lost from the disappearance of the writings, over whose destruction there has been so much lamentation? Little, if anything, of importance. Nothing to enlarge our knowledge of the poet's nature, genius, habits, failings;—certainly nothing to enlarge our knowledge of his virtues and more amiable characteristics. This much may be inferred confidently from what Byron himself tells us

of the 'Memoirs' in his letters to Moore and Murray, and from what Moore (who had studied the 'Memoirs' carefully and remembered them well) says about them in the 'Life.' Doubtless the papers contained several piquant anecdotes of celebrated persons; but some of these diverting stories, probably the raciest of them, would under any circumstances have been withheld from publication by the discretion of their intended editor, who was warned by the poet to use the materials cautiously, as they contained things not to be divulged. That most of the stories, fit for general circulation, appeared in other Journals and collections of Memoranda by the poet's hands, and were transferred from them to the 'Life,' Moore is at pains to assure his readers. But the anecdotes were the unimportant and subordinate part of the fragmentary narrative, which in its more carefully written parts related almost entirely to circumstances connected with the writer's marriage, from his first proposal to Miss Milbanke till his departure from England. The main part of the Autobiography was in fact nothing but the poet's statement of his intercourse with and his case against his wife. The writer did not pretend that this statement was fair or otherwise than one-sided. Even whilst assuring Moore that it was written 'with the fullest intention to be "faithful and true,"' Byron frankly admitted that it was 'not *impartial*,' adding passionately, 'No, by the Lord! I cannot pretend to be that while I feel.' In the same way he wrote of the 'Memoirs' to Murray: 'But you will find many opinions and some fun, with a detailed account of my marriage and its consequences,



as true as a party concerned can make such accounts, for I suppose we are all prejudiced.' Byron was, therefore, alive to the unfairness and injustice of the narrative. He may even be said to have been sensible of the essential untruthfulness of the record; for when a man of Byron's temper confesses to having written on such a subject with partiality to himself, and prejudice against the object of his animosity, and imperfect truthfulness, it may be taken for granted that he does not make the criminatory admissions on slight grounds. What has the world lost by the disappearance of the narrative, which even in its author's opinion had these serious faults? In the author's poems and letters there is abundant evidence how Byron thought and wrote of his wife when he was too angry with her to have any care for justice and facts, and how he felt towards and spoke of her when in his irritation against her he tried to be just to her. Moreover, one need not hesitate to say confidently what were the main lines and also what were the most notable details of the poet's prose story of his domestic troubles. Moore, the poet's sympathetic friend and warm partisan against Lady Byron, had carefully preserved the story which, however unfair it may have been to the lady, was of course not wanting in consistency with her husband's steadiest and most familiar asseverations to her discredit. Having studied the story, Moore may be said to have had it by heart. To compare Moore's partial story of his friend's matrimonial troubles with Byron's ordinary statements on the same subject and with all that both poets tell us about Byron's treatment of

the same subject in the destroyed 'Memoirs,' is to have the strongest opinion that the biographer's account of his friend's unfortunate marriage is a reproduction from memory of the autobiographer's version of the affair.

## CHAPTER X.

## BYRONIC WOMANKIND.

Completion of Lady Caroline's Distress—That Awful Legacy by Medwin—Teresa Guiccioli's Sacrifices for the Poet—Her Second Husband—Lady Byron's Hard Fate—The Valet's Verdict—The Sisters-in-Law after Byron's Death—Their Rupture—Moore's 'Life'—Lady Byron's 'Remarks' on the 'Life'—No Monomaniac—Dark Suspicions—The Origin of the Worst Slander—The Last Interview of the Sisters-in-Law—Mrs. Leigh's Death—Revival of Lady Byron's Animosity.

THE hearse containing Byron's coffin had worked clear of London's north suburbs and far into the country, and was making its slow way through Hertfordshire, when in the neighbourhood of Brocket Hall (Lord Melbourne's seat) it was met by an open carriage, in which a lady of rank and fashion was seated, with a gentleman by her side. Moderating its speed this carriage passed the hearse and the followers at foot-pace. Before the carriage had fairly passed the gloomy train, its occupants were informed that the hearse held the poet's coffin, and was on its way to Nottinghamshire. 'What! Byron?' ejaculated the lady with a sharp cry, losing consciousness at the moment of the exclamation. The lady was Lady Caroline Lamb; the gentleman by her side was her husband.\*

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\* There are different versions of this strange story of a dramatic incident; one writer representing that Lady Caroline and

Byron's funeral was followed quickly by the publication of Medwin's 'Conversations ;' the publication of Medwin's 'Conversations' was followed by the separation of William Lamb (afterwards Lord Melbourne) from the wife, whose levities, indiscretions, and exasperating ebullitions of temper, he had endured for so many years with noble equanimity and generous forbearance. The statements of the book, and the revelations and conflicts of feeling consequent on those statements, were the cause of Mr. Lamb's withdrawal from the lady, from whom he would have parted long before had he been a man of ordinary impulsiveness and vehemence. It is not to be understood that the separation was attributed by Mr. Lamb to the book or anything resulting from the book ; but to the people who had Lady Caroline's confidence it was known—and admitted by the lady herself—that the book determined her fate. 'Medwin's talk completed her distress,' Lady Morgan remarks tenderly, in her scrappy notes of Lady Caroline's biographic confessions. Nothing else could have ensued from the publication of the volume which contains this passage :—' I am,' (Byron is represented as saying) 'easily governed by women, and she (Lady Caroline) gained an ascendancy over me that I could not easily shake off. I submitted to this thralldom long, for I hate *scenes*, and am of an indolent disposition, but I was forced to snap the knot rather rudely at last. Like all lovers, we had several quarrels before we came to an open rupture. . . . Even during

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Mr. Lamb were driving, a second that they were on horseback, a third that they were on foot. The story is told here as it should be told.

our intimacy, I was not at all constant to this fair one, and she suspected as much. In order to detect my intrigues, she watched me, and earthed a lady into my lodgings—and came herself, terrier-like, in the disguise of a carman. My valet, who did not see through the masquerade, let her in; when, to the despair of Fletcher, she put off the man, and put on the woman. Imagine the scene! It was worthy of Faublas! Her after-conduct was unaccountable madness—a combination of spite and jealousy. It was perfectly agreed and understood that we were to meet as strangers. We were at a ball, she came up and asked me if she might waltz. I thought it perfectly indifferent whether she waltzed or not, and with whom, and told her so, in different terms, but with much coolness. After she had finished, a scene occurred, which was in the mouths of every one.’ . . . Of William Lamb’s carelessness respecting his wife’s behaviour, Byron is represented as saying to Medwin, ‘She was married, but it was a match of *convenance*, and no couple could be more fashionably indifferent to or independent of one another than she and her husband.’ To her shame it must be recorded that Lady Caroline bore similar testimony against her husband, in stronger language, when she said to Lady Morgan, ‘He cared nothing for my morals. I might flirt and go about with what men I pleased. He was privy to my affair with Lord Byron, and laughed at it. His indolence rendered him insensible to everything. When I ride, play, and amuse him, he loves me. In sickness and suffering he deserts me. His violence is as bad as my own.’ Spoken (as they appear to have been) at the crisis of her final rupture

with her husband, these words may be taken as an indication of the temper in which she responded to his outbreak of displeasure at Medwin's tattle.

Of the view Lady Caroline Lamb took of the passages of Medwin's book, that related to herself, there exists some noteworthy evidence in her own writing. One of her dateless letters to Lady Morgan, published in 'Lady Morgan's Memoirs, Autobiography, Diaries, and Correspondence' (edited by Hepworth Dixon)—a letter written in London, after the writer's separation from her husband, and immediately before her departure for the Continent—contains these words, 'Sir Charles Morgan was most agreeable and good-natured. *Faustus* is good in its way, but has not all its sublimity; it is like a rainy shore. I admire it because I *conceive* what I had *heard* translated elsewhere, but the end particularly is in very contemptible taste. The overture tacked to it is magnificent, the scenery beautiful, parts affecting, and not unlike Lord Byron, that dear, that angel, that misguided and misguiding Byron, whom I adore, although he left that awful legacy on me—by Medwin. Remember thee—and well.' In Hepworth Dixon's book this paragraph appears with an important error due to the carelessness of his copyist for the press, who mis-reading the two most important and perhaps the most distinct words of the legible letter inserted by mistake 'my memory' for 'by Medwin'—a strange slip that of course appears in the many reproductions of the passage in newspapers and magazines. The original MS., containing this reference to 'the awful legacy' Byron left the writer 'by Medwin,' is in the possession of Mrs. Hepworth Dixon.

It is *said* that William Lamb visited his wife and corresponded with her during the period that intervened between their separation and her death from dropsy, in her forty-second year, on January 26th, 1828. He certainly both wrote to her and came over from Ireland to her, when she was dying. She also certainly wrote to him from London on one occasion. Tenderly cared for by his family as well as her own people, Lady Caroline, in addition to the pleasure which came to her from his forgiveness of her wayward behaviour, had also the consolation of seeing her lofty-natured husband and conversing with him, before it was too late for her to enjoy his presence and the music of his voice. He was by her side in her last moments ; and his was the generous right hand that wrote the tender notice of her death and character in the 'Literary Gazette' of February 16th, 1828. 'There are,' he wrote, 'many yet living who drew from the opening years of this gifted and warm-hearted being hopes which her maturity was not fated to realise. To these it will be some consolation to reflect that her end at least was what the best of us might envy and the harshest of us approve.' To the last, tears used to rise to Lord Melbourne's eyes, when he thought of the wife who, needing his forgiveness much, had all of it that she needed. It is perhaps, no extenuation of her most considerable faults and follies, that in her fantastic and flighty way she really loved the poet whom she injured so greatly,—possibly loved him, even when in her jealous wrath she was striking at him with the vicious energy of an enraged tigress.

After what has been said of Byron's relations

with the Countess Guiccioli, the readers, who still believe he loved her in the manner alleged by Moore, must be left in the enjoyment of the fanciful misrepresentation, which the biographer sustained by falsifying one of the letters to Hoppner. That she conceived a vehement passion for Byron, and that on the subsidence of the passion she nursed a strong affection for him are matters scarcely to be questioned. But there has been much exaggeration respecting the salutary nature and beneficial consequences of her influence on the poet. For that exaggeration Moore is chiefly accountable, and Moore knew no more of the matter, and was indeed in no respect better qualified to form a sound judgment upon it, than any intelligent man of the world reviewing all the recorded circumstances of the case at the present time. Indeed, any person of the present generation, fairly endowed with judicial temper and sagacity, is in a much better position than Byron's authorized biographer ever was, to take a fair view of the Countess's character and influence over the poet; for he would bring to the consideration of the subject a mind unbiassed by an attentive and sympathetic perusal of the destroyed 'Memoirs.' Moore's intimacy with Byron certainly gave him no peculiar fitness for dealing with this particular question, for he was never intimate with the Italian Byron, a very different person from the English Byron, of whom Moore had seen a good deal in the midst of the gaieties and distractions of four London seasons. Of the Countess Guiccioli the biographer knew scarcely anything from personal observation. With the exception of the two or three occasions, when he spoke



with her at La Mira during his brief stay in Venice. Moore's intercourse with the Lady was by the pen. The knowledge he gained of her on these occasions was necessarily superficial; the estimate he then formed of her must have been largely inferential and conjectural. All his other knowledge of her came to him from letters in the world's possession. It is not surprising that he took a far too favourable view of the lady's disposition, endowments, and power over his friend;—a view differing widely from the judgments of the several English persons who, with finer and more penetrating perceptivity, enjoyed far better opportunities for studying the Countess and observing her intercourse with the poet. Sanguine for the consequences of the liaison till he made Teresa Guiccioli's acquaintance, Shelley on becoming acquainted with her soon predicted she would repent her rashness; a prediction that certainly would not have been made, had he not felt her insufficiency for the difficult task she had undertaken. Hoppner knew that, from the commencement of his association with the lady, Byron only cared for her as a libertine usually cares for a new mistress. To Leigh Hunt and the English ladies of Hunt's 'set' in Italy, it was manifest that Teresa had no enduring power over her cooling admirer. At Ravenna the poet murmured against her as an embarrassment, and in his diary grumbled at her folly in quarrelling with her husband; at Pisa he found amusement in worrying her; at Genoa he was longing to get out of her way; at Cephalonia he wrote her cold and brief notes in a language unfamiliar to her; in his dying moments he had not a thought for her. And what was Teresa

Guiccioli's influence over Byron, while it lasted? It is absurd to speak of it as 'the influence that put an end to the Venetian excesses ; for they had ended before he made her acquaintance. Instead of being the good angel, who raised the poet from the mire of his Venetian depravity, she was the bad angel, who detained him in Italy when he was disposed to return to England, and, had it not been for her power over him, would probably have returned to his native land and proper place in its society. With creditable feminine repugnance to the flippancies and indecencies of the earliest Cantos of 'Don Juan,' Teresa Guiccioli expressed her dislike of the poem as frankly and cordially as Mrs. Leigh declared her abhorrence of what she deemed the most reprehensible achievement of her brother's life. And so long as Byron wanted the heart to continue the work, which had been received by the English press in a way that put him out of conceit with the performance, Teresa Guiccioli induced him to lay the poem aside ;—a fact that, taken by itself, would in the judgment of many persons seem to entitle her to considerable respect. But when Byron wished to resume the discontinued enterprise, she had neither the power to prevent him from resuming it, nor the will to hold him to his promise not to resume it. The promise being that he would not continue the poem without her permission, she gave the permission as soon as she saw he would take it in French fashion, if it were not conceded. This speaks little for her power over him. Able to make him do what he wished, and leave undone what he had no desire to do, she could not even in the season of her strongest ascendancy over

his actions withhold him from aught on which he had set his heart. If his enthusiasm for Italian unity and freedom was fanned and quickened by her words, it must be remembered that she opposed his enthusiasm for the Greek cause, and did her utmost to divert him from the expedition in which he found an honourable death.

Far too much, also, has been said of the sacrifices Teresa Guiccioli made for the poet's good. Moore speaks of the lady's sublime disinterestedness in surrendering the material advantages of her conjugal position for the sake of Byron's welfare and happiness. This matter is dealt with by the biographer, as though the sacrifices had no end in view but the poet's contentment and benefit; as though the Contessa had no thought for her own pleasure when she withdrew herself from the husband for whom she had no affection, and gave herself to the paramour whom she desired passionately; as though it were a rare thing in the world's history for a woman to be recklessly imprudent when she is violently in love; as though it were impossible for any but an exceedingly generous and magnanimous woman to pitch over a husband with great possessions for a suitor of smaller affluence. What were Teresa's sacrifices? She gave up a husband she did not care for, to join hands with a lover in whom she delighted. She went from the authority of an obscure Italian Count to the protection of a celebrated English peer. Her husband was old and formal, Byron was comparatively young and irresistibly charming. Her husband was rich (even to a revenue of 10,000*l.* English, a-year), but still no richer than her lover appeared and was reputed to be.

Her husband lived with pomp and the show of affluence ; so did her lover. By her husband she was checked and thwarted in half-a-hundred matters, whilst her lover delighted to humour and indulge her in every whim. No doubt, in exchanging her husband for her poet, she exchanged a secure position for a position of insecurity. After the wont of women in love, she could not realise the insecurity of the position to which she was flying. She, pretty simpleton, conceived the one to which she was going would prove no less secure than the one she was leaving. The unrealised and unthought-for disadvantage of the condition she entered in the pursuit of her pleasure scarcely entitles her to praise for a sublime indifference to prudential considerations. If the disadvantage gives her conduct a colour of self-sacrifice, it must be admitted that in going from Count Guiccioli to Byron the Contessa sacrificed in the way of pecuniary advantage nothing more than wives usually sacrifice, when at the instigation of love and dislike they pass from their husbands to men who are not their husbands. She sacrificed no more, indeed considerably less, than Lady Carmarthen sacrificed, when she eloped from the heir to a wealthy dukedom and went off with penniless Jack Byron.

It should also be remembered that, knowing her husband could not marry again during her life, knowing he still remained her husband by the law of her church and country, knowing also the greatness of her power over him, Teresa Guiccioli never regarded herself as shut out from all possibility of restoration to his favour. At the moment of her flight from the Papal territory, Teresa could have remained

in Romagna and avoided imprisonment in a cloister by returning to her husband, who was ready to receive her. It has been a matter of reproach against Byron that he made no provision in his will for the Contessa, who had sacrificed so much for his happiness. There was a time when he contemplated leaving her a legacy of 10,000*l.*,—the legacy she declined when he spoke to her of his purpose. Dr. Elze says, ‘He should have made the necessary provision without consulting her; for to his proposal what could she give but a refusal?’ Knowing the lady’s case better than his biographers, it is conceivable that Byron took the lady at her word and forbore to leave her the money, scarcely less from care for the Contessa’s interest, than for the interests of Mrs. Leigh and her children, to whom he wished to leave an adequate provision. Possibly his neglect to bequeath the Contessa the 10,000*l.* was due to his knowledge that she could at any time return to her husband, a sincere opinion that it would be best for her to go back to him, and a strong feeling that she would be more likely to take this best course, if she were left in straitened circumstances. Anyhow after Byron’s death Teresa Guiccioli made up her differences with her husband, and went back to his protection. In the later term of her middle age (in 1851), Teresa Guiccioli was married to the Marquis de Boissy, the peer of France under Louis-Philippe and Senator of France under the Second Empire, whose fantastic hatred of the English nation was scarcely more comical than his pride in having for his wife a woman who had been an Englishman’s mistress. If it is not true, it may be taken for truth that this eccentric Marquis used to introduce his

acquaintances to the lady, with this pithy announcement, ‘*Madame la Marquise de Boissy, ma femme, ci-devant maîtresse de Lord Byron.*’ That the Marquise saw nothing to resent in this brief statement of her claims to respectful consideration may be inferred from the spirit and tone of her ‘*Recollections of Byron.*’

Some parting words must be given with respect to Lady Byron and the Honourable Mrs. Leigh. It would have been more accordant with biographical usage, and more agreeable to the feelings of the writer of this page, to dismiss those ladies from consideration with a few kindly words on the death of the famous man with whom they were so closely associated, and to say nothing or little of their subsequent years. Under ordinary circumstances it would be the duty of the personal historian to regard the closing years of their lives as matters of purely domestic story, not to be brought under the world’s consideration. But there are occasions when the biographer’s obligations constrain him to intrude on the privacy of individuals, and exhibit the incidents of their domestic seclusion. Lady Byron’s action after her husband’s death made her closing years an affair of history, to be investigated and dealt with like all other affairs affecting the life and character of the nation of which she was a unit;—made them unfortunately one of the saddest and dismallest chapters of the social story of England’s nineteenth century. And it is not for those whose honour and dignity are most deeply affected by her fame, and whose feelings are most painfully troubled by public reference to what is most regrettable in her career, to deprecate the further discussion of incidents that burden and afflict the intellect and

conscience of universal humanity. Remembering that they owe a duty to the nation and race whom they *should* love, as well as to the one individual whom they *did* and now that she is in her grave *do still* love, they should rather encourage and aid all honest efforts to wipe out to its last and faintest speck an infamy that, so long as any colour of it remains, is a stain on England's honour and a darkening of England's glory, as well as a blot on our great poet's reputation and a vile disfigurement of his humanity.

There is no need to speak hard words of the poor lady, who notwithstanding all her general disposition towards goodness and all her strenuous efforts to move righteously through life, did perhaps the evillest thing done by any woman of her race and period. On the contrary she has strong claims to sympathy and compassion. Her lot was hard, her fate cruel. The barely conceivable woman, the one woman in a thousand to be happy with Byron for a husband and make him happy with her for a wife, would have been an idolizing wife and at the same time a wife incapable of jealousy; devoted without being exacting; circumspect in all her ways (even as Lady Byron was) and yet tolerant of his levities and shortcomings; vivacious and buoyant and at the same time possessing genuine meekness of spirit; a humourist capable of understanding his wild speech; a mistress of joyous wit and mirthful raillery capable of lifting him out of his melancholy moods without ever irritating him by apparent want of sympathy; a companion invariably amiable and never vapid. It was less Lady Byron's fault than her misfortune that she had not this combination of needful endowments;—that she

was wanting in most of them. It was altogether her misfortune that Byron, being what he was, insisted on making her love him in spite of herself; and that, being what she was, she yielded reluctantly to a suit few women could have resisted. More confident in his loveableness and goodness, than in her ability to be all he needed in a wife,—(‘If I am not happy it will be my own fault,’ was her significant reply to Hobhouse’s parting words, as she drove off from Seaham for the honeymoon),—she married him from love, and meant to be a good wife. In a few months she knew her incompetence for the high and difficult place into which she had been drawn. In seven or eight months she was at variance with her husband. Sixteen months after her marriage she had quarrelled with him, parted from him in bitterness, and been pilloried before the world’s gaze as a captious and unforgiving woman. The fault of the quarrel was not all on one side. From girlhood she had been more conscientious and right-minded than amiable and happy-minded. Her nature was not flawless;—let her be stoned for that by those only who are void of imperfections. If Byron’s temper was seriously defective, she also suffered from defects of temper. But her contribution to the domestic discord was light and trivial in comparison with Byron’s offences against her. If she was ‘unforgiving,’ she certainly had much to forgive. They do her an injustice and Byron no real service, who laying it to her door that he did not live happily with her, speak of her as the only woman who could not manage him. What unfair use has been made of Fletcher’s saying that ‘all women could manage my Lord but my Lady!’



As though a valet's opinion were worth a rush on so nice a question! It is absolutely untrue that Byron was easily managed by women in the long run. Any woman's fool so long as he was in love with her, he was a most difficult man for each of his successive queens to manage as soon as he was out of humour with her. Which of the several women, who influenced him strongly for a while, managed him for any considerable time? Lady Caroline Lamb? Their friendship was a succession of quarrels; and in the end he quarrelled with her more fiercely than he quarrelled with her cousin. Jane Clermont? With all her cleverness and piquancy and sentimental responsiveness, she kept him in hand for fewer months than his wife had done. Marianna Segati, whom he certainly loved as much as the Countess, by whom she was succeeded after an interval? The reader remembers the course and finish of that liaison. Teresa Guiccioli, who 'nagged' at him at Pisa and bored him to death at Genoa? And yet we are to believe the poet was manageable by any woman, because his valet said so!

Human nature being what it is, and Lady Byron's nature what it was, circumstances forbade the hope that her affection for her sister-in-law would survive Byron's death by many years. It is certain that the poet's sisterless wife entered wedlock with a disposition to live on the most affectionate terms with his sisterless sister. Advancing to Augusta with heartiness, Lady Byron found a congenial friend in her sister-in-law, and 'took to her' (as the familiar phrase goes) with a warmth and thoroughness that delighted the poet. When the poet made his will, assigning to Augusta

for life and afterwards to her children, nearly all that remained to him of his possessions beyond what he had devoted to the provisions of his settlement on his wife, Augusta was not more delighted than Lady Byron by the arrangement. It was to Augusta that Lady Byron throughout her brief personal association with her husband looked for sympathy, counsel, guidance, in all her troubles. Instead of telling her jealous annoyance at Byron's frequent visits to Melbourne House to her own mother, she confided it to Augusta. When she mistrusted her ability to manage Byron by herself, the young wife sought to rule him through his sister. During the troublous months in which Ada came to the world, Augusta was everything to Lady Byron,—nurse in sickness, consoler in sorrow, the only sunshine of the deepening gloom. When Lady Byron journeyed from Piccadilly to Kirkby Mallory, hoping that Byron would pay Leicestershire a visit in the following month,—a visit that should result in the birth of an heir to his peerage,—it was an unspeakable comfort to her to know that Augusta (the only person who understood Byron and knew how to manage him) was at her brother's side. For days before Byron learned from Sir Ralph Milbanke his wife's purpose to repudiate him, Augusta knew of her sister-in-law's determination. The mutual confidence of the sisters-in-law was perfect, their mutual affection perfect. Though Dr. Lushington admonished her to keep away from Augusta till the most painful of the business about the separation was over, Lady Byron could not return from London to Leicestershire, after seeing her lawyer, without having an interview with her sister-in-

law, before the latter went back to Cambridgeshire. Loyal and staunch to her brother throughout that miserable time, Augusta was no less loyal and steadfast to her sister-in-law. When the deed of separation had been signed, Byron declared that from the commencement of his domestic troubles, although Augusta had been his companion for weeks, he had never heard her speak or known her write a single unkind word of his wife. In truth, Augusta's courageous devotion to her sister-in-law seemed to strengthen, and gain strength from, her generous devotion to her brother. And Lady Byron was fully informed of Augusta's loyalty to her in her absence, and was deeply grateful to her for it. Throughout the eight wretched years that intervened between the separation and Byron's death, the relations of the two sisters-in-law underwent no diminution of cordiality. Though Hobhouse entreated Augusta to be mistrustful and cautious of Lady Byron, less communicative to her of news that came to her from or about Byron, he admonished and warned in vain. And all throughout those same years Lady Byron's bearing to Augusta was one of confidential affectionateness. How Augusta was the channel through which Byron received intelligence of his child, the reader has not forgotten. Nor has he forgotten the significance of the poet's last (unfinished) letter to Augusta. The intelligence of Byron's death had no sooner reached England than Lady Byron and Augusta were in communication about the destruction of the 'Memoirs.'

For some years after Byron's death—to be precise, for something more than five years and eight months,

—these relations of mutual sympathy and confidence were maintained in the intercourse of the two sisters-in-law ; the wife whose unforgivingness had become a by-word with lettered people over the whole world, and the sister whose voice, even when modulated to accents of reproof, was sweet music,—the sister of whom the dead had written,—

‘ Though human, thou didst not deceive me,  
Though woman, thou didst not forsake,  
Though loved, thou forebores to grieve me,  
Though slandered, thou never couldst shake;  
Though trusted, thou didst not disclaim me,  
Though parted, it was not to fly,  
Though watchful, ’twas not to defame me,  
Nor mute, that the world might belie.’

But it was not in the nature of things that the wife, whose opportunities for reconciliation to the great master of song were in the grave, should persist for another five years in the spirit of sisterly affectionateness to the woman who seemed to have robbed her of the honour and glory that were hers by right of marriage. The last five years had been years of unutterable trial, scorching humiliation, and gnawing remorse to Lady Byron, who in every indication of the change of sentiment for the poet, and every proof of the growing admiration of his genius, saw a sign of the increasing disrespect in which she was held—or at least felt herself to be held. It was small solace to her that the world forebore to upbraid her, and with utterances of condescending compassion for her sorrows veiled the opinion that the sorrows, though severe, were no undeserved punishment. She knew the world’s judgment of herself

from the tone in which it spoke of *him*. His words were on every one's lips, his fame had passed into his country's glory. People no longer gossiped of his frailties and errors, but rendered homage to the genius that afforded them the larger part of their highest delight. The *mauvais sujet* had become the world's hero, his censors had come to be regarded as the world's enemies. Ten years since, had she told aloud the real story of her husband's offences against her, the general verdict on the case would have been in her favour. But now, the fullest statement of her case would have been received as tantamount to a confession of her conjugal impatience, selfishness and disloyalty. The time had passed for her to speak to her own advantage. Henceforth it would be for her to hold her tongue in her own interest. She would only provoke exclamations of abhorrence by an avowal that she had indeed broken away from her husband, because his petulance irritated her, because his unkind words exasperated her, and because his determination to travel, when he ought to have been content to remain in England, worried her. In charity and pity people were silent about her; and their silence was a whip of fire to her pride. And whilst mute tongues declared her condemnation, the lands resounded with the praises of her sister-in-law. It was ever in the widow's mind how the glory about Augusta's brow might have dwelt upon her own head. If she had not seen the manuscript of the 'Epistle to Augusta,' so long withheld from the press by Mrs. Leigh's care for her sister-in-law's peace of mind, Lady Byron knew the 'Stanzas to Augusta,' by heart. Lady Byron would have had a

faultless temper, a flawless nature, to persist in loving Augusta to the last.

A rupture between Lady Byron and Mrs. Leigh was inevitable, provided they survived Byron for a considerable period; and the rupture took place between the later part of November 1829 and the later part of February 1830. The time of the quarrel is noteworthy. Though they quarrelled like gentlewomen, they quarrelled bitterly. No one will be surprised to hear that they differed on a trivial matter, *i.e.* put their quarrel on a trivial matter, distinct from the real cause of Lady Byron's soreness against her sister-in-law. At the outset of the affair Mrs. Leigh was excusably though distinctly wrong; soon the wrong was altogether on Lady Byron's side. Mrs. Leigh gave her sister-in-law cause for transient displeasure; and Lady Byron, magnifying a venial indiscretion into an unendurable outrage, made it an affair of war.

By her brother's will—the will which at the time of its execution occasioned Lady Byron so much generous gratification—Mrs. Leigh was interested in the 60,000*l.* in the hands of the trustees of Lady Byron's marriage-settlement. ‘Now I do hereby give and bequeath all the remainder of the purchase money to arise,’ runs a clause of the poet's will, ‘by sale of my said estate at Newstead, and all the whole of the said sixty thousand pounds, or such part thereof as shall not become vested and payable under the trusts of my said marriage-settlement, unto the said John Cam Hobhouse and John Hanson, their executors, administrators, and assigns, upon such trusts, and for such ends, intents, and purposes, as

hereinafter directed of and concerning the residue of my personal estate ;'—the main ends and intents being that Mrs. Leigh should enjoy the revenue during her life, and that after her death the capital should in due course be distributed in accordance with the directions of the will amongst her issue. Mrs. Leigh's income from the property left her by her brother was therefore affected by the interest accruing from the 60,000*l.* in the hands of the trustees of Lady Byron's marriage-settlement. Being poor for her condition of life, Mrs. Leigh had need of whatever increase might come to her from a better investment of the money ; and she was naturally desirous—may even at times have been too urgent—that the money in which she was interested should be invested so as to yield her the greatest possible advantage.

Under these circumstances it is not surprising that, when there was need for an appointment of a new trustee of the money in which she was interested, Mrs. Leigh wished for the appointment of one in whose zealous and watchful care for her advantage she could confide. As she was not a woman of affairs, it is not wonderful that she spoke to Lady Byron and other persons of her acquaintance as though she had at least a moral right to a voice in the appointment of the new trustee of her sister-in-law's marriage-settlement. Of course she should have held her tongue on the matter. In making it a grievance that her wish in the affair was disregarded she was guilty of an indiscretion, which should have been met by Lady Byron with a few such kindly words as, 'No, I can't oblige you in this matter, Augusta ; I must have my way in this matter ; but

you may be sure, my dear, that your interests shall be looked after.' But Lady Byron—by this time a woman of middle age, sorrowful and embittered in heart, sensitively tenacious of her 'rights,' and very sore against Augusta—could not take a fair and amiable view of the trumpery matter. Discovering in the affair an unwarrantable intrusion on her authority, Lady Byron was indignant in the superlative degree. There was indignation on the other side. There usually is indignation on both sides, when ladies differ on a matter of business and dignity and feeling. Mrs. Leigh's indignation soon subsided into sorrow at having offended her sister-in-law, and a desire to prevent the misunderstanding from causing a permanent breach between them. On seeing how much Lady Byron was incensed, Mrs. Leigh would fain have conciliated her. But Lady Byron would not consent to reconciliation. All these matters are given thus precisely, because of their obvious relation to the state of mind in which it was possible for Lady Byron to think and speak of her sister-in-law as she did think and speak of her in later time. It is a fact that in her anger against Mrs. Leigh for an excusable indiscretion, and a few warm words arising out of the dispute about that indiscretion, Lady Byron determined to withdraw both herself and Ada from her sister-in-law. By her conduct to Augusta, Lady Byron certainly justified Byron for pinning to her fame the galling epithet of 'unforgiving.' The monstrous story told by Mrs. Beecher Stowe was far more the result of Lady Byron's animosity against Augusta than of repugnance to the poet's libertinism.



Whilst the two gentlewomen were differing on so slight an occasion for serious difference, other matters happened to aggravate Lady Byron's dislike of the sister-in-law with whom she had lived for so long a period in close intimacy and affectionate confidence. Lady Byron's quarrel with Augusta on the trivial pretext was not consummated till the later part of February 1830 ;—the month in which she read with reasonable indignation Moore's 'Life' of her husband. Beginning in November 1829 the disagreement of the sisters-in-law had in no degree abated, when the first volumes of Moore's 'Life' came to Lady Byron. Dislike of Augusta had for several weeks agitated Lady Byron, when she wrote and dated (February 19, 1830) her 'Remarks on Mr. Moore's Life of Lord Byron,'—a letter, that of itself disproves the story told to Mrs. Stowe, by its avowal that after her arrival at Kirkby Mallory the writer was a promoter *of* and party *to* Lady Noel's invitation to Byron to come to them in Leicestershire. Lady Byron's belief in her husband's insanity would not account for her concurrence in that invitation, had she only two days earlier (whilst thinking him insane) fled from him with the determination of never holding intercourse with him again. Another matter to be noticed in connexion with the 'Remarks' (February 19, 1830) is the suggestion that the writer's persistence in silence as to the real and revolting cause of her departure from Piccadilly was a tender concern for Mrs. Leigh's reputation and feelings. When the 'Remarks' were being written tender concern for Augusta had passed from Lady Byron.

Though she made her bitter quarrel with

Augusta on the paltry matter of the trusteeship, Moore's 'Life' may be held largely accountable for the energy with which Lady Byron pushed the quarrel in its latest stages, and for the bitter feeling that animated her against her sister-in-law even to the grave, and beyond the grave. It is not wonderful that she was exasperated and maddened by the book which, so far as she was concerned, was the reproduction of the defamatory 'Memoirs,' for whose destruction so much pains had been taken, so much scandal provoked, and so much money spent—in vain, so far as her feelings were concerned. The book that clothed the unforgiving wife with ignominy, glorified her sister-in-law. If Lady Byron had never seen the 'Epistle to Augusta' in manuscript, she now read in type that sacred outpouring of the affection, which had been diverted from the wife, who should have earned it, to the sister who so richly deserved it. If she had never studied the awful 'Incantation' lines of 'Manfred,' she now perused them with the aid of the biographer who was at pains to make her realise all their terrifying significance,—

‘ Though thy slumber must be deep,  
Yet thy spirit shall not sleep ;

Though thou see'st me not pass by,  
Thou shalt feel me with thine eye.’

Ere long she had an opportunity for studying 'The Lines on hearing that Lady Byron was ill.' Is it strange that the proud, nervous, too self-respecting woman abhorred Augusta, was quick to think evil of her, was eager to justify her abhorrence of her to her own conscience, was desirous of making the world

share in the abhorrence? Is it strange she could persuade herself that Augusta rejoiced in the 'Life,' had even inspired much of the book, which was designed to make Byron's wife shameful and Byron's sister glorious throughout all coming time?

What followed must be considered by the light of the fact that Lady Byron lived to detest and abominate her sister-in-law;—the Augusta towards whom Lady Byron is represented by simple, foolish Mrs. Stowe, as overflowing to the last with Christian charity. It is not suggested that Lady Byron deliberately set herself to work to frame and disseminate defamatory stories of her sister-in-law, knowing the stories to be false inventions at the moment of making and divulging them. Had she been guilty of even that wickedness, human charity would not be without excuses for the miserable woman, groaning under a burden of shame too heavy, writhing under torture too acute, for her powers of endurance. But it is far more probable—indeed, it may be taken for certain, in so far as such an hypothesis may be dealt with as a certainty—that Lady Byron (a rightly meaning, though often a very wrongly feeling woman, to the last; a woman sincerely set on being good and doing good) believed everything she said to her sister-in-law's discredit; believed the monstrous and absolutely false tale she told to Mrs. Beecher Stowe, and (with divers variations) to so many other people, that there is no ground for questioning the substantial accuracy of Mrs. Stowe's record of the communications made to her.

It is the fashion of many persons to speak of Lady Byron as the victim in her later years of mono-

mania on this subject ; but the word in no fair way represents the condition of her mind, which never was mad or unsettled or disordered in such a manner as to justify a writer in rating her with sufferers from insanity. To the last she was a clear and precise observer, and expressed her thoughts with lucidity, coherence and vigour. To the last she had a subtle and logical mind. By no definition of insanity, that would be entertained seriously by a Lunacy Commissioner, was she an insane person. How then did it come about that, being unquestionably sane, she could take so mad and absolutely wrong a view of her husband, whom she regarded affectionately after his death, and of the woman who had been her close and beloved friend for nearly fifteen years ? It is not difficult to answer this question.

At all times an assiduous reader of her husband's works, Lady Byron found a fascinating employment in discriminating between the egotistic, the sympathetic, and the imaginative elements of the compositions, and in forming a conception of his character and a history of his career out of the matters she classified under the first head. In her well-known and often published letter (written in 1818) to Lady Anne Barnard she wrote, 'In regard to his' (Byron's) 'poetry, egotism is the vital principle of his imagination, which it is difficult for him to kindle on any subject with which his own character and interests are not identified ; but by the introduction of fictitious incidents, by change of scene and time, he has enveloped his poetical disclosures *in a system impenetrable except to a very few*, and his con-

stant desire of creating a sensation makes him not averse to be the object of wonder and curiosity, *even though accompanied by some dark and vague suspicions.*’ Excellent as a precise and accurate description of Byron’s poetical method, this passage is also noteworthy as an illustration of the pleasure Lady Byron found in examining her husband’s works, line by line, in a detective spirit.—of her practice of reading them in this spirit,—and of her confidence that she was one of the very few persons, capable of penetrating the subtle webs of mystification, under which the poet veiled his egotisms, hiding himself even whilst he was in the act of revealing himself.

Taught by the poet himself, as we have seen in earlier chapters of this work, to accept his poems as autobiographic confessions, the multitude took every stanza and line of his writings from the first Canto of ‘Childe Harold’ to the latest of ‘Don Juan’ as so much information about the adventures, experiences, habits, temper, passions, sentiments of the author himself. Readers of finer culture and nicer judgment knew that the sincere sentiments of the man were puzzlingly and inseparably intermingled with the sentimentalities of the poet and the pure inventions of the creator; and were generally of opinion that after throwing off one of these medleys of genuine feeling, playful fancy, and poetical conceit, the poet himself would have been unable to say what of it was fact, what was fiction, and what was simply perverse contradiction of fact. To most of these readers of culture and discrimination it was enough to enjoy the poem, without troubling themselves to inquire what of it came from the writer’s heart, what from his

brain, and what from the pure waywardness of his nature,—what of it came from his personal experiences and what from the experiences of other persons. At the same time there were a few readers whose chief delight in a new poem by Lord Byron was the pleasure they found in dissecting it and analysing it, and separating the Byronic realism from the Byronic idealism of every passage. Lady Byron was one of the *very few*, who could penetrate all the mysteries, solve all the riddles, and explain all the perplexities of every ‘poetical disclosure:’—one of the very few who could seize the real Byron under any disguise, and never mistook for a piece of the real man anything of specious show which he had used for the sake of its misleading effectiveness on the uninitiated vulgar. Reading Byron’s works in this way in the second year of her separation from him, Lady Byron continued to read them in the same spirit and with the same confidence in her sagacity, in the fifth year of her widowhood—and afterwards, when animosity against Augusta, impairing her critical perceptivity and disturbing her judgment, disposed her to believe any evil thing of her dead husband, provided her sister-in-law showed as the companion and sharer of his guilt. In these later stages of her career, the Byron, who rose to Lady Byron’s view out of the misread and miserably mis-brooded-over pages of ‘Manfred’ and ‘Cain,’ was indeed ‘an object of wonder and curiosity;’ but instead of being the real Lord Byron, he was a fictitious monster begotten of the reader’s ‘dark and vague suspicions.’

It is also worthy of remark that Lady Byron was disposed to entertain these dark and vague

suspicious by the influence of the most odious of all the slanderous rumours, that were active to her husband's infamy, long before it ever occurred to her to conceive him guilty of aught more flagrant than ordinary libertinism. Originating in the Genevese tattle about Byron's intimacy with the two sisters-by-affinity on the banks of Lake Lemán, this most hateful of all the poisonous calumnies grew out of unwholesome gossip that had no reference whatever to his own sister.

Let it not be imagined that Lady Byron and Mrs. Leigh never saw one another again. The present writer *believes* (on grounds which would not justify him in saying he *knows*) that, with the exception of the single occasion, to which attention will be called immediately, they never again held intercourse by word of mouth. The bitter quarrel of 1829-30, a quarrel arising from reasons so widely different from its pretext, a quarrel made on grounds so trivial but for considerations so serious, may have been so patched up that they met again with the forms of civility and a hollow show of friendship. Intercourse they must have had through the post and their agents on matters of business and domestic moment; but it is believed by the present writer that the breach never was so patched up and covered over. But on this point he may be mistaken. It is, however, certain that 1830 saw the death and interment of the old cordially affectionate relations between the sisters-in-law;—that they never came together again in *heart*. Two persons are needful for a quarrel; but it is enough for one of them to be bent on making the quarrel, or sustaining it when made. This quarrel had

only one maker and one sustainer; and the person to make and sustain it was not the person, who gave the trivial offence, that became the excuse for so serious a rupture. It is certain that from 1830 to 1851, Lady Byron regarded her sister-in-law with growing animosity, as a woman who had done her grievous injury. Whether it was nursed secretly (as it sometimes was) or declared to others (as it occasionally was), this dislike of the woman, whom she accused of darkening her honour and destroying her happiness, infatuated Lady Byron. It is also certain that this poisonous animosity disposed Lady Byron to conceive and believe enormous evil of her sister-in-law. It is also certain that—whether it covered the whole twenty-one years since the appearance of Moore's 'Life,' or was an affair of shorter duration—the total estrangement of the two sisters-in-law had existed for a long period, when they had their last interview under the following remarkable circumstances.

On a certain Tuesday morning of April 1851, an aged lady, having the appearance of an extreme invalid, came to the London Bridge Station and seated herself in a first-class carriage of the next train for Reigate,—the place of her destination. At a glance it was obvious that she could never have been beautiful; must even in the spring of her youth have been plain. But the signs of sickness and sorrow in her countenance made her interesting to her fellow-travellers and won their sympathy. She was indeed a woman of sorrows, and had made acquaintance with griefs unimagined by most of her sex. Of those griefs too much has been told elsewhere. She was Byron's sister, stricken with years



and illness, and within a few months of the hour when trouble and unkindness ceased to vex her.

A loiterer on the platform of the Reigate Station, waiting for the arrival of this train, would have seen amongst the persons about him a man-servant in drab livery. On the arrival of the down train, this footman bestirred himself. Taking a lady's calling-card from his pocket, he hastened to the first-class carriages, and went from carriage to carriage, holding out the card to the view of the occupants of the seats. At last he came to the carriage in which Mrs. Leigh was seated. On seeing the card with Lady Byron's name upon it, Mrs. Leigh declared herself the person he was seeking. The man said a fly was in attendance ; and in another minute, Mrs. Leigh was driving to the White Hart Hotel of Reigate. On leaving the carriage at the door of the inn, she was shown to a private room, where Lady Byron and the Reverend Frederick Robertson, of Trinity Chapel, Brighton, were expecting her appearance. Lady Byron, an invalid, had come from Brighton with the clergyman for an interview with her sister-in-law. During the long years that had passed since their estrangement, Augusta had often wished for friendly speech with her sister-in-law. It had come to Mrs. Leigh's knowledge that she was said by Lady Byron to have been the influence that prevented the poet from coming to just and kindly views respecting his wife. There were times when Lady Byron's chief sorrow was that she and her husband had not been reconciled before his death : times when her greatest complaint against Mrs. Leigh was that the reconciliation would have taken place, had not she used her influence over her

brother to perpetuate the estrangement. In fact, Byron had never been more certain that Mrs. Clermont was the chief cause of the separation, than Lady Byron became at these times that but for Augusta the separation would have been of no long continuance. Byron would have come to just views about her, if Augusta had not prolonged the mischief:—this was the complaint of Byron's widow. It having been reported to Mrs. Leigh that Lady Byron was possessed by this fancy, and spoke bitterly of her for other matters, Augusta imagined that she could disabuse her sister-in-law of this and other painful notions, if she could only get speech with her, face to face. Hence Augusta's desire for an interview with the sister-in-law, who had in former time loved her. Hence it was that she travelled from London, hopeful for good from this meeting at the White Hart Hotel. The one invalid lady living at Brighton and the other in London, and each of them being too weak for the journey to and fro between London and Brighton on the same day, it had been arranged that they should meet at this half-way house. The sisters-in-law cannot be said to have met on equal terms; for whilst Mrs. Leigh came to the meeting unattended, Lady Byron came to it, attended by the clergyman who was just then her most confidential spiritual adviser.

Knowing she had not long to live, and holding the old simple notion that the words of the dying are strong to convince even the most suspicious and incredulous hearers, Mrs. Leigh journeyed to Reigate, hoping that the assurance of her lips (so soon to be still for ever) would relieve Lady Byron's mind of

its misconceptions,—more especially of the quite groundless notion that she had been the cause of her brother's persistence in unkindly feeling towards his wife. No good resulted from this curious meeting, which opened with Mrs. Leigh's solemn assurance that in former time she had been loyal alike to her brother and his wife. To this assurance, Lady Byron replied with a show of surprise that her sister-in-law had nothing more to say. Mr. Robertson looked as though he were puzzled,—as though he and Lady Byron were being trifled with. What more Lady Byron and Mr. Robertson expected to hear from Mrs. Leigh does not appear. That they had come to Reigate for some larger and more momentous communication was obvious from their words and looks ; and it may well have distressed Mr. Leigh after her return to town, to know that Mr. Robertson suspected her of refraining at the last moment from saying what she ought to have said, and what she had come there to tell them. These expressions of dissatisfaction on the part of Lady Byron and the clergyman were followed by words between the ladies, that did not make them better friends. Lady Byron directly charged Mrs. Leigh with aggravating Byron's bitterness to her, and encouraging him to remain in enmity towards her. Mrs. Leigh repelled the accusation warmly, and, in support of her assertions that she had consistently and invariably done her best to be a peace-maker, quoted certain words spoken by Hobhouse,—words that agitated Lady Byron profoundly, causing her to start and change colour. Of course, no good came of all this. Lady Byron returned to Brighton with

a determination never again to see or hold communication with her sister-in-law. And Mrs. Leigh went back to London in grief at Lady Byron's perplexing treatment of her. Mrs. Leigh would fain have seen Mr. Robertson again, to satisfy him by the exhibition of letters that she had spoken nothing but the truth to Lady Byron in his hearing. But as he was of opinion no good could come of the interview or from his examination of the documents, the clergyman declined to see her again on the matter or go further into the business. It is nothing to Mrs. Leigh's discredit that Mr. Robertson regarded her with something more than suspicion ; for his mind was wholly prepossessed by the representations of the other lady.

Six months later when Mrs. Leigh was on her death-bed sinking slowly, there were indications of a revival of affection for her sister-in-law in Lady Byron's breast. But neither of the sisters-in-law saw the other again ; and though she seems to have relented to Augusta under the shadow of approaching death, it is certain that Lady Byron's animosity against her husband's sister revived soon after the grave had closed over her. Though she often helped them with her purse, and was their fitful benefactress, Lady Byron's relations with Mrs. Leigh's children were not altogether to her credit. Sometimes her action towards them countenanced the opinion that she valued them and felt amiably to them, in proportion as she could use them as instruments for their mother's annoyance or discredit, and disregarded them in proportion as they distinguished themselves by devotedness to their much-suffering parent. After Mrs. Leigh's death, Lady

Byron did her utmost to lower Augusta in the esteem of one of her more faithful and affectionate children. The animosity that made her desirous of setting the child against the mother who had passed away, was not inoperative in Lady Byron's breast, when she told evil of her dead sister-in-law to comparative strangers; when she told the hideous story to so slight an acquaintance as Mrs. Beecher Stowe, well knowing that Mrs. Stowe was a person not unlikely to communicate it to the world. But enough has been said to show that Lady Byron's animus towards her sister-in-law was not (as simple Mrs. Stowe imagined) the animus of a Christian woman overflowing with charity and tenderness to one of her own sex.

## CHAPTER XI.

## A PARTING NOTE.

The whole of the Evil—Byron's several Failings—Gifts and their Givers—Seventy Years since—Now and Then—The Change of Manners—One of its Causes—Thurlow and Nelson—Free-living and Free-thinking—The Man and his Times.

ALL the ill that can be truly told of Byron has been set forth in these pages, together with much of the good. The grateful worshipper of his genius, who has called attention to his fine sensibilities and generous impulsiveness, his kindness and courage, has palliated none of the failings, has extenuated none of the errors, has exhibited every one of the infirmities of the extraordinary man, who has stirred England more deeply than any other poet since the earlier years of the seventeenth century, who has influenced human kind outside England more widely and profoundly than any writer of our literature, and who, in whatever else of his aspirations he failed, will be found in the slowly moving ages to have achieved his ambition to be 'remembered in his line with his land's language.' His passions and pettinesses, his follies and foibles, his sins against himself and others, have been recorded. The evil of him has been told in every particular, told with emphasis ; no ugly fact has been glossed ; each dark matter has been brought out to the light of heaven. And this

has been done, so that on closing these volumes the reader may be confident that he knows all the worst, though by no means all the good, of the poet's cruelly misrepresented life, and in that confidence may dismiss at once and for ever, as poisonous falsehood, all the odious untrue things that have been uttered to his infamy.

By many readers it will be said that, after being relieved of all the stains put upon him by slander, the real Byron was a man of numerous blemishes and infirmities. Be it so. Where is the man without some of the defects of human nature? Why should a higher standard of moral excellence be demanded in a poet, whose genius is in a great degree the result of physical endowments and qualities that render him more liable than other kinds of men to irregularities of thought and action? Instead of fancying that the highest poetical faculty exempts its possessor from the temptations of desire, and defends him against the forces making for certain forms of immorality, people should rather regard that faculty—not more divine in its fruits than human in its source—as a perilous gift that entitles its holder to the largest measure of charitable allowance for his deviations from the sober ways of men less sensitive and excitable. It will be no hurtful consequence, should these volumes make readers see more clearly than heretofore that poetical genius does not necessarily dispose its possessor to moral orderliness. Good will come of it, should this survey of a marvellous being's scarcely edifying story teach readers that they should enjoy and criticise a great poet's writings without feeling it their duty at the

same time to sit in judgment on his domestic errors. People should accept an artist's gifts without being over-curious and severely censorious respecting the giver's private habits and fire-side eccentricities. The faultiness of the latter is no reason for declining the former. If it could be shown that all the evil things said of Byron fall short of the truth, his writings would be no less delightful; could he be proved to have been as pious as Heber, his poetry would be none the better.

Moreover, in respect to his private morality, Byron should be judged (if judged at all), not by the notions of propriety and the sentiment of these later times of the nineteenth century, but with due reference to the views and manners of English Society in the century's earlier decades. If he was a libertine, it must be remembered that he lived in times when libertinism was general. Of all the differences between the England of to-day and the England of seventy years since, none is more noteworthy than the present reprobation of certain kinds of domestic immorality that were regarded in Byron's day with a leniency which is remembered in this year of grace with astonishment. The abolition of duelling is largely accountable for this remarkable change of social sentiment and manners. So long as every father, husband, brother, was free to avenge with the pistol the wrongs done him by libertinism, society troubled itself little about the offences of libertines. Instead of going out of their way to punish violators of the seventh commandment English gentlemen left such offenders to be dealt with at ten paces by the immediate sufferers from their offences. In truth,



they were not without a certain sympathy and admiration for the offender, who following his favourite pleasure with the pistol in his hand, in times when physical daring was valued at something more than its proper worth, could at least claim credit for personal courage. Under these circumstances the world tolerated and even smiled at irregularities, which now that individuals may no longer defend themselves against them by process of bloodshed, are checked by the wholesome social sentiment that declares them odious outrages. In the England of Byron's childhood, bishops and deans were delighted to dine with Lord Thurlow in Great Ormond Street, at the same table with the Chancellor's mistress and illegitimate children. The England of the poet's boyhood idolized Nelson, although he quarrelled with his wife and found a Teresa Guiccioli in Lady Hamilton. The England of Byron's manhood was the England that, some seven years after the poet's death, looked on with approval and sympathy, whilst William the Fourth made his eldest natural son an Earl, and in other ways ennobled his other natural children, simply because they were his illegitimate issue. Is it not a fact that the England of seventy years since was an England, in which properties were notoriously passing, in every quarter of the country, out of the right line of descent, through the confusion of progeny consequent on the prevalence of a particular kind of domestic immorality? Whilst libertinism was thus prevalent, why should Byron be pilloried and stoned for having been a rake?

And whilst Byron's England was so much more tolerant of libertinism, she was proportionately more

intolerant of free thought in politics and religion than the England of to-day. In this period of virtuous homes, and Darwinism in the drawing-room of every one of them, it is amusing and instructive to observe in Moore's 'Life,' how dainty and mealy-mouthed and regretful the biographer becomes when he refers to Byron's half-hearted scepticism, whilst a few pages later he speaks of the puerile dissoluteness of the poet's early manhood and the lighter profligacies of his Continental life, as though they were upon the whole to his credit. The fact is that, whilst making much hypocritical noise about the wickedness of their ways with women, society did not war against Byron and Shelley on account of their libertinism, but on account of their political and religious opinions. Had Byron voted with the Tories, treated the Prince Regent respectfully, and held his pen and tongue about matters touching the Thirty-nine Articles, England's higher society would never for a single instant have sided with Lady Byron in her domestic troubles. These facts must not be overlooked or forgotten by readers who would know the Real Lord Byron. To judge the great man fairly, one must remember the manners of his contemporaries.

THE END.

LONDON:

Printed by STRANGEWAYS & SONS, Tower Street, Upper St. Martin's Lane.

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